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THE

March 1980 \$1.95*

Theatre Australia

Adelaide Festival

Ruth Cracknell/Frank Thring

Keneally on Bullie's House

Neil Fitzpatrick



BERLIN
Komische Oper
BALLET

The best of the ADELAIDE FESTIVAL OF ARTS comes to the SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

The Sydney Opera House Trust, by arrangement with the Adelaide Festival of Arts Inc., presents

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Theatre Australia

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SUPPLEMENT

BERLIN KOMISCHE OPER BALLET

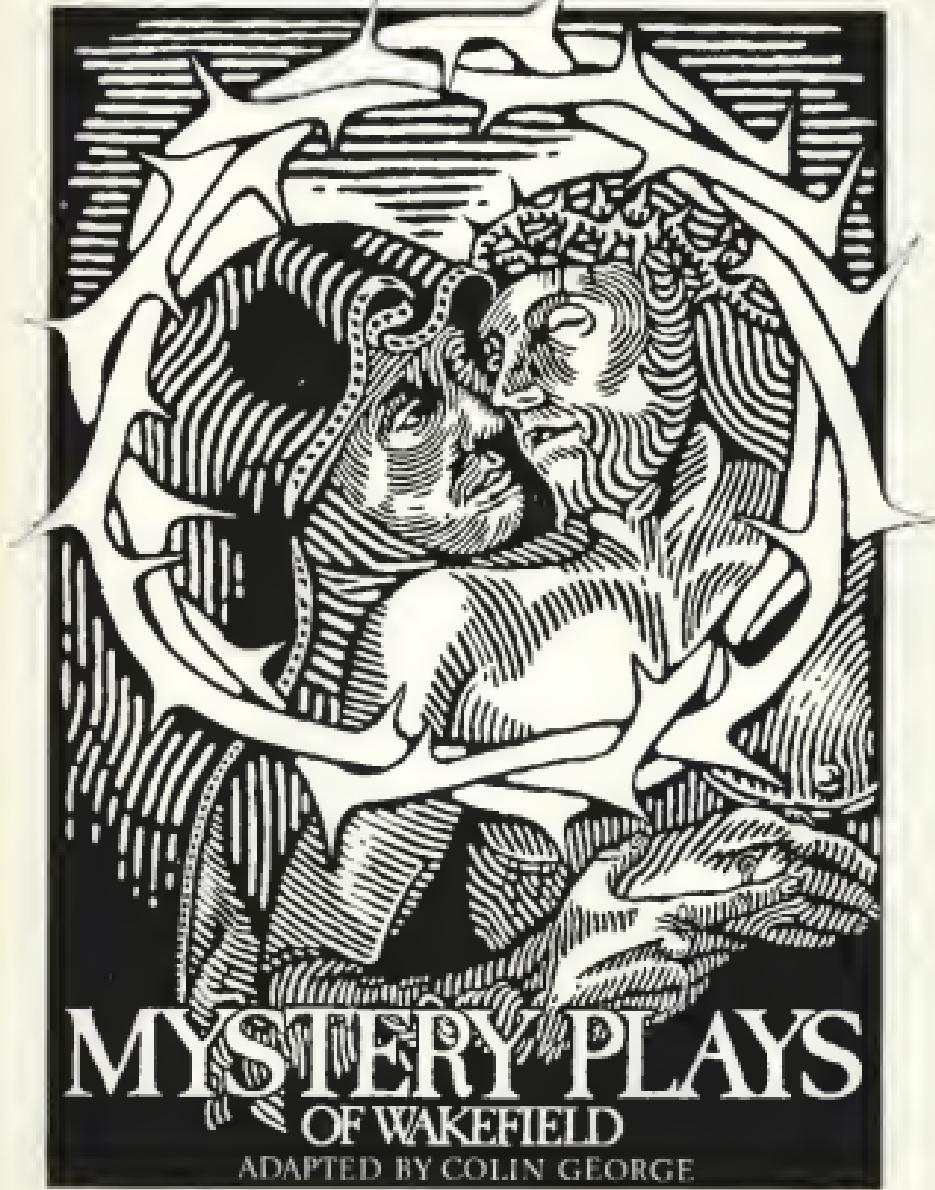
INTRODUCTION

NOT ANOTHER SWAN LAKE

SOME FACTS ABOUT THE KOMISCHE OPER

SOME OF THE DANCERS

STATE THEATRE COMPANY



MYSTERY PLAYS
OF WAKEFIELD
ADAPTED BY COLIN GEORGE

1980 ADELAIDE FESTIVAL AT THE PLAYHOUSE

COMMENT

Bringing the Berlin Kammer Oper Ballet to Australia has been a massive undertaking. Christopher Hunt of the Adelaide Festival saw them in Berlin and contacted Donald MacDonald of ADC Paradise, who sent off their production manager to East Germany to see what could be done. It needed a consortium of the Adelaide Festival and the major entrepreneurial group, together with the sponsorship of BP, to bring on the heavy artis and arrange for the performances of Australian symphony orchestras of Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne.

This is not just a fine company presenting an excellent version of *Swan Lake*. This is a version more true to Tchaikovsky's original conception than perhaps any production since its first controversial performance. The pacification by nineteenth century sensibilities, sentimentalised by more than a century of standard productions, has been cleared away to reveal the heart of the work — a story of romantic passion almost desperate in its urgency. Over a long period, meticulous research into Tchaikovsky's original score, story line and intentions formed the basis for this production.

It is well known that in both their sporting and cultural activities the Eastern Bloc countries subscribe to a degree unheard of in the West. We need think only of the Berliner Ensemble set up and日夜 for Brecht at the Teatros Ransas, the size of the last Adelaide Festival has produced more than a handful of works in twenty years.

These two production director-writers (along with Peter Brook, whom when more freely have worked more or less with the modern avant-garde) contemporary dance companies than that of drama companies in that they have been totally responsive, with their respective performers, for the creation of original works.

In this country, too, we notice that it is the dance companies who have taken the lead in generating performance works from within the group, and allowing themselves the time, as opposed to the constant turn-over of product, that makes the possible. The Sydney Dance Company and the Australian Dance Theatre of Adelaide, both artistic directors — respectively Graeme Murphy and Joanne Taylor — are the major choreographers for their companies. Their works are specifically created with and for their own performers and take new directions not only in content, but also in form. Both

choreographers seek inspiration from and representations of the Australian life they see around them — so Murphy's *Wombats* and *Surfers* and Taylor's *Devil at Half-Crest* — but also embrace universal themes as in Murphy's full length ballet *Poppa*, on the life of Capers, or Taylor's *carriageworks* *Blubbers*.

In the theater world a major practitioner of this approach is the *West in* Peter Brook, also to appear at Adelaide. Again there is the mix of the particular — recently Jerry's *Obra*, though scripted, absolutely a performance piece in itself — and the general — *The H and Conference of the Birds*, which have been performed in Africa and Iran. There is also a deeper obligation on that a major art is to discover a universal theatrical language.

Brook is revising here (or when the Australia Council's Life savings was first being used) *Bob Adams*, Director of the Theatre Board, now *Confidence of the Birds*, particularly as the model for the kind of enterprise the theater world needs. As such the brief was extensive in its implications, the funding only at best adequate and too often zero, and the responsibility on arts, invited enormous.

The one offering we have had so far seems to have fully missed the mark. Perhaps putting all the eggs for this kind of work in one basket is foolish. Rather the larger theater companies (and Sozzi's *Athenaeum 2* at the MTC may well be a step in this direction) should also find some way of accommodating compensated performance-based work into their operation. The enormous requirements of quantum public performance should be set aside in the area.

Of course time and money are essential, but it is increasingly being noticed that our theater scene is precariously bounded. If some new incentives are not found, either in this way, or in Jack Hibberd's idea of breaking down the monoliths into smaller, more vital groups, not only is there little sign of fresh wind to carry us out of the doldrums, but our big, subsidised theatre companies will continue their entrenchment as service and status in the leisure field.

Asking for more money at a time of economic recession may appear naive, but public money should not only be a cushion against bad after-faith, they should relate to entitlement, the right to live and above all the need for new creation.

Theatre Australia

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Theatre Australia gratefully acknowledges the financial assistance of the Theatre Board of the Australia Council, the Literature Board of the Australia Council, the New South Wales Cultural Grants Advisory Council, the Arts Grants Advisory Committee of South Australia, the Queensland Cultural Activities Department, the Victorian Ministers of the Arts, the Victorian Australian Arts Council and the assistance of the University of Newcastle.

MAILING LIST

Manuscripts and editorial correspondence should be forwarded to the editorial office, 10 Elizabeth Street, Millfield, NSW 2744. Telephone (02) 47 44 96.

While every care is taken of manuscripts and visual material supplied for this magazine, the publishers and their agents do not liability for damage which may occur. Unchecked manuscripts and visual material will not be returned unless accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope. Originals accepted in signed articles are not necessarily those of the editors.

ADVERTISING

The subscription rate is \$21.00 post free within Australia. Cheques should be made payable to Theatre Australia and posted to Theatre Publications Ltd, 10 Elizabeth Street, Millfield, NSW 2744.

For international and overseas subscriptions see page 81.

Theatre Australia is published by Theatre Publications Ltd, 10 Elizabeth Street, Millfield, NSW 2744. Telephone (02) 47 44 96. Distributed by subscription and through agents by Theatre Publications Ltd, and in metropolitan throughout Australia by Allen兄弟, Sydney.

Theatre Australia is produced by *Scenarius* Publishing Pty Ltd, Telephone (02) 31 00 0000, of Theatre Publications Ltd. Advertising by *Set Set Advertising Pty Ltd*, Telephone (02) 47 44 96. The magazine is printed by *Alpha Printers*, Mountview, Theatre Publications Ltd. All rights reserved except where specifically stated. The cost of print is exclusive of postage and packing. Responsibility for posting is a general carriage.

I N F O

Adelaidians Festival Fringe activities, still collectively grouped under the banner master, Focus, seem set to provide a varied and inexpensive alternative to the official programme. An early press release gives details already of over thirty events, grouped under the headings: Dance, Drama, Street Performers, Music, Galleries and Exhibitions. And, since it is the nature of Fringe offerings often to be last minute, spontaneous affairs, one imagines there will be more...

The scope is far-reaching. In drama alone there are such widely differing productions as *Hercules's Last Half Hour*, Ottawa's *Crimes Of Passion*, Congress's *War of the World*, late night revue and a new play from Adelaide's playwright, Anthony Thorogood, and the only one on the local front. From interstate come Victoria's WEST Community Theatre with rock musical *Any Rags*.

Performance Dept from Melbourne University, and the Flying Trapeze troupe who are to join with Adelaide groups in cabaret. Topping the Drama bill are the Cambridge Footlights from UK's Cambridge University, whose reputation goes before them, having spawned in the past the now legendary *Second The Fringe* programme, as well as other well known names in British comedy.

Ian Spink, described as one of Australia's most exciting young choreographers, is visiting the Festival in an official capacity to work for State Opera Company's *Death In Vienna*. His company, Spink Inc, will present "26 solo and Other Dances" for Focus. Alongside him in the arena of dance and music are several groups and individuals from Adelaide and interstate. Street performers range from dance to puppetry and clowning. See 107.



Carl Marlow, Graeme Murphy and Paul Saliba of the Sydney Dance Co.

Graeme Murphy and his newly named Sydney Dance Company are back in action after a five week holiday period boasting some exciting new talent for 1980. Dynamic Australian dancer Paul Saliba has returned home after two years with the Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance in New York to join Murphy's company as dancer, teacher, choreographer. His first new work for the company will form part of the Sydney Opera House season which starts on May 22.

After seven years with the much acclaimed Stuttgart Ballet in Europe and elevation to soloist status, dancer Carl Marlow opted to return to Australia with his new wife Deesha. After the Stuttgart's successful New York season he headed for Sydney to see the Australian Festival of Dance where companies around Australia were on display at the Sydney Opera

House. Marlow and the SDC performed two works in the Festival, *Spartacus* and *Shakespeare*, both of which helped to achieve a new level of popularity for the company during 1979 and reconfirmed Carl Marlow's suspicion that Murphy's was the company for him.

The SDC's season in the Drama Theatre for 1980 has been expanded to eight weeks with fifty two performances comprising three programmes by the best Australian choreographers available, including Barry McLeod, an Australian resident in London whose works best known to Australian audiences include *Prodigal Son* for London Festival Ballet and *Tracadero* for the Australian Ballet.

The season includes the premiere of Graeme Murphy's *Boomerang* and *Chloe* and *Arabesque*, using Richard Meale's beautiful score of the same name.



Deesha Marshall and Graeme Murphy in *Spok*, Feb 7th



Nancy Hayes

The Combined Talents of puppeteer Richard Bradshaw, clowns Patrick Cook and singer-songwriter Robyn Archer are about to launch *Captain Lazar and his Earthbound Circus* to the world.

They are inviting audiences to "gasp at the spectacular cast of dovers" in their puppet cabaret for the Marionette Theatre of Australia, which is premiering at the Adelaide Festival in The Space from March 18, and will then go to the Sydney Opera House Recording Hall for a month from March 19. If all goes well, Melbourne will see the show later, in June.

Captain Lazar will be well known to readers of the *National Times* where he sprang from the injured pen of Patrick Cook. In puppet form his Earth-

bound Circus will be created by five puppeteers working from underneath. It is not a puppet show for children. "You'll laugh, you'll cry, you'll have your children at home and you'll be glad you did", they say.

Members of the Circus include such characters as Trevor Waggoner, lady of Disaster, Professor of Applied Disaster, with a whale ventriloquist act, there's Brian the Graphic King, a whale cockatoo that sings Gilbert and Sullivan, and Marlene Burmann, who has an uncanny resemblance to a certain prime minister, is a Master of the Ethnic Arts and has a koala act.

And with all this is music, produced by a group of four who will make up a jug band, euphonium, guitar and vocals, fiddle, mandolin and percussion.

Nancy Hayes is off to the Adelaide Festival this month with the Sydney Theatre Company. And what's the show?

"Over recent months when asked what I was doing next, the reply *The Getting Mi Act Together And Taking It On The Road*" has usually been greeted with "Well, I always wondered why you didn't have an act. Where are you taking it?" The "act" in question is the subject of a musical by Gretchen Upright and Nancy Foddy currently playing its second year at downtown Circle in the Square, New York. At a performance I attended during my recent trip, it was enthusiastically received and engendered a lively discussion afterwards between cast and audience.

"When Richard Wharriett decided to include a musical in his first Sydney Theatre

Company season I was delighted that more and more music theatre was beginning to take its place in the repertoire of our state companies. Musicals, on a large scale, are an expensive proposition, but the small-scale production such as *Art* lends itself to consideration. It has a cast of eight including the musicians who play a very active part in the show.

"With these new opportunities opening up for the presentation of musical plays I hope it will encourage the creation of original material to place Australian Music Theatre in the healthy state our plays now enjoy. Indeed, with the current export of our productions to London and New York, it would appear that at last we are getting our act together and taking it on the road."



Robyn Archer

I N F O

As We Are... "We can't alter the lights, they're all set up for Old-House next week," said a stage manager in a Western Australian country town to actress Beverly Dene. Now after a tour of five states Beverly will present her one-woman show, *As We Are*, at the Melbourne Theatre Company's Atheneum 2, starting on March 31.

Beverley has made an extensive search through diaries, journals, letters and stories by Australian writers and derived *As We Are* to show the variety of the Australian people, from the early settlers to contemporary men and women.

"In choosing the material I have three criteria," Beverley said. "It has to entertain me, it has to move me, to make me think, laugh or cry. And does it have something to say about us as Australians?"

Using the writings of Australians like Rachael Haining, aboriginal poet Jack Davis, Georgina McCrae, Mary Gilmore, Paul Adam-Smith, Nancy Keesing, Beth Parson, Tom Hungerford and Mary McCourell, Beverley has woven a humorous, moving two-hour entertainment.

As We Are received its premiere at the Festival of Perth in March 1978 and Beverley has subsequently toured the production to Queensland, Tasmania, the Northern Territory, Victoria, country centres and Western Australia.

As We Are is devised by Beverley Dene and directed by Dena Mackay.

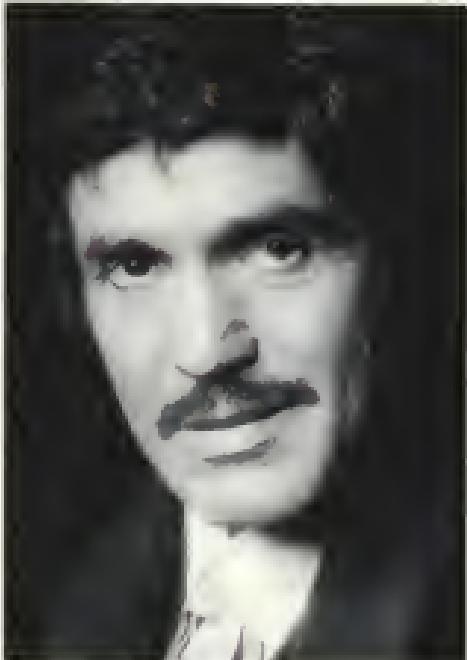


Photo: Murray McLean

The Music Hall opened its twenty-fifth production on Friday February 8, a re-run of *Dear Drivve*, their first and most popular show. This production is directed by Alton Harvey who also plays the villainous Sir Francis Lovision.

But off stage there is a different villain involved in the affairs of the Music Hall, with whom they seem to be so unpopular that there is a distinct possibility that the show may have to close for the last time.

In 1978 there was a change in the Theatres and Public Halls Act which came to include the Music

Hall, who had previously operated under the aegis of the Department of Justice. As the very first theatre restaurant, the only way they could get around regulations when they started in 1961 was to operate as a restaurant with a floor show.

Following such incidents as a fire at the Savoy Hotel, Kings Cross, theatre restaurants came under the Theatres and Public Halls Act for the first time and became subject to the most stringent safety regulations. Places like Bumratty Castle and the Marly Music Loft are also having difficulties, and the Kilburn 680 Theatre had to close some eighteen

months ago.

George Miller at the Music Hall has done an enormous amount to comply with the requirements of the Department of Services and the North Sydney Council. He has reduced his patrons to approximately four hundred, he has modified productions to fit the requirements, with the result that *Dear Drivve* is a much smaller production than we have been used to, there is no longer a revolve and indeed the whole stage area has been reduced from 100 to 25 square metres and is enclosed on all sides except the audience in a "fire check" capsule. Added to this the dressing rooms have been altered and two fire escapes fitted to the theatre.

George Miller used to run a newspaper called *The Northern News*, which gave a good deal of exposure to the dealings of the North Sydney Council, including the notorious St Remo affair. He is now afraid that personal animosity is running me mad in the shape of unreasonable requests, such as that the Music Hall should not have opened on February 8 on pain of Equity Court injunction, in spite of the fact that other demands are currently being met.

Miller has gone ahead, and intends to continue, but if such action continues he and his wife will regrettably sell, or close down, the theatre and return his daughter to London.

If this should happen the housing of the villain would become something other than the delightful entertainment it has been for the past twenty-five years at Neutral Bay.



RTC Director Peter Barclay

Trucking into the *Lighties*...The Riverina Trucking Company has recently appointed Peter Barclay as its Artistic Director for 1980. Barclay has worked for Narrogin and the Hunter Valley Theatre Company.

"We are in the midst of planning our first season. It will reflect our intention to expand the programme range of RTC through a commitment to new writing. We are extremely excited to be premiering an Australian piece by Max Rodgrigan, *Don (Mad Dog) Morgan*, the picturesque figure from the colonial past of Southern New South Wales which will play in Wagga and then tour the region for three weeks with the assistance of the Arts Council."

Barclay recognises the importance of community involvement in regional theatre. "Besides maintaining our indoor activities we want to move into the streets and capture the

imagination of the local community. We intend to start classes and have just appointed Gordon Beattie as Community Director. Gordon will begin a programme of community projects aligned to regional festivals and events such as the Wagga Agricultural Show."

At the moment RTC is negotiating tours in the region, and eventually hopes to find an opening for a short season in Sydney. "The profession as a whole

pragmatists and particularly the funding bodies must recognise a commitment to regional companies. We have taken on the role once carried out by the great touring companies in the Depression and the thirties. We bring professional theatre to remote country areas, and with foresight and energy could alleviate the problems of regional tours by large companies from the capital cities. Let ours not be the fate of J.C.W.'s *Amen*."

Polygon Theatre company, based in Hobart, began its 1980 programme with *The Golden Farbary Award*, touring Tasmania, and the second production, *The Glass Menagerie* which will also be seen in Hobart and on tour, opens in early April.

A healthy subsidy from the Tasmanian Arts Advisory Board for 1980 has been welcomed with relief by Polygon's director, Don Gay, who has steered the company since its formation in 1974. The subsidy means that Polygon is at last able to establish itself on a professional basis (albeit a modest one).

It is now virtually the only Tasmanian theatre company offering regular paid work to actors. Despite this, the limited population (accentuated by the northward migration of the ageing young) can make casting problematic. Rehearsals quite often have to be fitted around filming, radio and television recording schedules, as the crop of experienced actors in Hobart is small and they continually work elsewhere.

The determination to take theatre throughout the state, and a commitment to school curriculum performance means that Polygon necessarily avoids large-scale productions in favour of portable ensemble pieces. Thus previous offerings



Don Gay

have been "chamber" plays, musicals and theatre-in-education through 1980 will see *Requiem for a Dead Girl* and *The Road Home* (both in Hobart), *Beth & G* and *Cloud Nine* (both in Hobart), *She Sleeps To Conquer*, Polygon sees its educational role as being a vital one.

Don Gay hopes that future developments may include the employment of an administrator and possibly also a designer. He intends to continue expanding the programme and touring as much as possible (perhaps interstate as well as at home) and to perform material by local writers. His continuing nightmares include the lack of suitable performing spaces throughout the state, and naturally, the balancing of income and expenditure. Grateful as he is that TAAB have stepped in, he is acutely aware of the need to supplement their assistance from other sources. *Bruce Cornwell*

Apologies to Melbourne photographer David Parker, who we unfortunately failed to credit for his superb cover shot of Neil Perrier and Frederick Penlow on our Christmas edition.

Theatre Australia



NIMROD

509 Elizabeth Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010 (02) 699 5003

Nimrod Upstairs
from Wednesday 12 March

THE HOUSE OF THE DEAF MAN

John Anthony King
director John Bell
designer Kim Carpenter
Paul Bernon, Steven Footitt, Joseph Frost,
Vivienne Garrett, Deborah Kennedy,
Peter McDermott, Kerry Walker

Nimrod Downstairs
from Wednesday 16 April

LAUNEROONIES!

director Geoffrey Rush
designer Caroline Jones
Gillian Hyde, Russell Newman, Geoffrey Rush,
Tony Taylor, Pat Thomson

Nimrod Upstairs
from Wednesday 23 April

Cloud 9

Michael Frey
director Neil Armfield
designer Emma D'Arcy
Paul Bernon, Jennifer Hogan,
John McTernan

Nimrod Downstairs
until Sunday 23 March

TRAITORS

Stephen Snell
director Neil Armfield
designer Bill Hopkins
Judi Parr, Michele Pellow, Colle Trulli,
Max Gillies, Noreen Horlehurst, Barry Otto

Nimrod at York Theatre, Seymour Centre
from Tuesday 8 April

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14 PERFORMANCES ONLY!

UBU (in French)
Aldo Jerry
director Peter Brook
8, 9, 10, 11 April at 8pm

THE BO (in English)
based on Cohn Turnbull's book
The Mountain People
director Peter Brook
11 April at 8pm,
12 April at 2.30pm and 8pm

THE CONFERENCE OF THE BIRDS (in English)
Translated by Jean Claude Clerc after
Farid Us-Din Attar's 12th century Persian poem
director Peter Brook
16, 17, 18 April at 8pm
19 April at 2.30pm and 8pm

The tour by Peter Brook and C.I.C.T. has been made
possible by the generous assistance of the
Association Executive d'Action Africaine,
the Australia Council and by arrangements with
the Melbourne Festival of the Arts Inc.

WHISPERS RUMOURS & FACTS



By Norman Russell

Venerable actress and director Colleen Clifford's highly successful production last year of Goldsmith's *She Stoops To Conquer* has earned her an Australia Council grant to help in the presentation of a Restoration comedy, Sir John Vanbrugh's *The Relapse, or Virtue In Danger*. First staged at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, in 1697, it is now to have a four weeks season at the Cell Block Theatre, opening March 19. Cast includes Miles McMillan, John Warnock, John Fitzgerald, Frank Garfield and Michael Berster.

In passing, it seems new play ideas were just as hard to come by at those centuries ago. *The Relapse* was a sequel to and parody of Colley Cibber's first play, *Love's Last Shift*. *The Fool In Fashion*, staged the year before. Then eighty years later Sheridan wrote a more polished version of Vanbrugh's effort called *A Trip To Scarborough*.

Quotable quote from Robert Mould's Sydney press conference before beginning rehearsals for son William's production of Alan Bennett's *The Old Country* have had extensive exposure, but here's a few you may have missed:

On whether he ever robes him of roles: "Age limits you far more than shape."

On his favourite role: "Invariably the one I am about to do."

On regret: "I have none of any consequence."

On the naming of his sons: "Wilton was not named after the carpet, but after his grandfather Sheridan after Sheridan Whiteside because he was born on the opening night of *The Major Who Came To Dinner*."

On which of his own plays he liked best: "Edna And Mr. Sack."

On whether he was disappointed by the film version of his "Not at all! The money was lovely. But Spenser Tracy, who starred in the movie, came to my dressing room after watching the last night of the stage production and said 'I'm afraid I've made a cock-up of your play. Nobody told me it was a comedy'."

I was delighted to be told by Harold Jones that at the boarding house he and his wife, Ensemble Theatre general manager Rosemary Jones, stayed at in Stratford-on-Avon, each room had, instead of the usual *Golden Bible*, a volume of Shakespeare's plays. Their landlady, an enthusiastic booster for the Royal Shakespeare Company, was nevertheless a perceptive critic. The production of *The Taming* they saw was every bit as disappointing as she had told them.

A scoop is a scoop, as any honest scribe will tell you. Like, for instance, Maria Praeger's artful revelation in *The Australian* — two days before Lord Mayor Nelson Meers' official announcement at the Theatre Royal — that Doreen Warburton and the Q Theatre had won the Sydney Theatre Critics' Circle Award for 1979. This was unexpected acknowledgement of the Circle's importance, because naughty Manette from the team opposed the National Critics Circle, refused to join it, attacked and harassed it on every possible occasion, and gloated when withdrawal of Australian Council funding killed it off. I mean, how uncouth can you get?

Regrettably, a member of the Circle must have been indiscreet, but nosy leakage marred the announcement of Sydney's other major award, the seventh annual trophy presented by The Gigg, a banhushabal showbiz oriented circus. Decided by secret ballot, none knew the result till I handed a sealed envelope to guest of honour NIDA director John Clark. Runaway winner was Ron Haddrick for the sustained excellence of his work in *The Club Love To The Devil* and *The Get Game*. He had formidable competition, the other eight nominees being husband and wife acting team Anthony Whistler and Oliver Reddick, entrepreneur Ken Freedman, administrator Elizabeth Butcher, designer Larry Eastwood, the

Named production team for *The Festival Flings*, The Q Theatre and Doreen Warburton, director George Whistler, actress Henry Walker Ron and his wife being in London with the Nimsed production of *The Club*, the trophy was accepted on his behalf by Nimsed publicity manager Alba Carpenter.

Did you know that the "shot board", today an indispensable piece of equipment in all TV studios, was so named many years ago by the late John Barrymore when failing memory forced him during filming to read his lines from a slate held by a prompter off-screen?

A letter from Alexander Arkdale, founder of the Marian Street (see Community) Theatre, laments the parlous state of British theater and says he is likely to be back in Australia before the end of the year.

"Besides being American playwrights of acknowledged talent, what do Sam Shepard, Israel Horovitz, Lanford Wilson, Thomas Babe, Ed Bullins, Maria Irene Fornes, A R Gurney Jr, Elisabeth Swados, Steven Trisch, Christopher Durang, Mark Medoff, Michael Cristofer and Richard Wesley have in common?" asked Richard Hammer in a recent issue of *Forerunner*.

"None of them has written a Broadway hit," he answered.

Substitute "Australian commercial theater" for "Broadway" and you can equate a formidable list of highly talented local writers. Hibberd, Russell, Burn, Hawaii, Power, Putvins, Black, Kennedy et al.

None of them writers has had a commercial success, even back in the days when commercial theater was a losing proposition. They have made it only in fringe or subsidised companies. Even David Williamson's appearances in commercial houses have been in subsidised theater productions.

Hammer said that for today's theatre intellectuals, popularity and quality are hardly synonymous, despite the fact that in the history of theatre most great plays were written for popular audiences. He added: "Strained playwrights have always been keen of popular approval. If Sam Shepard woke up one morning to discover he'd written a Broadway hit, one feels certain he'd be one guilt-ridden playwright."

SPOTLIGHT

Sideshow Alley

By Jill Sykes

It's like one of those excuses for a lottery fill-in in the letter to name one of the most exciting female theatrical talents in Australia... R — B — N. Except that there are two answers — Robin Nevin and Robyn Archer. So the prize would have to be a ticket to *Songs From Sideshow Alley*, in which they both appear.

This is a late-night show commissioned by the Adelaide Festival. It has been written by Robyn Archer, who considers it a step between cabaret and a more substantial form of theatrical writing, which she is already tackling in the form of a play about Lorenzo de Medici.

For Robin Nevin, a straight actress whose many outstanding performances include the title role in *A Cheeky Soul* and Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, it is a chance to use her singing voice. (Don't be fooled when she turns up on TV with a rich soprano as Nellie Melba. "I've just got used to raising other people's voices and I'm being asked to burst forth with my own".)

The idea for *Sideshow Alley* came to Archer at the International Hotel in Dacca, Bangladesh, when she was on tour last year with Jerry Wesley, one of the two musicians involved in the new show. "It was after the gig, about midnight, with the curfews around us and the soldiers parading up and down at the bottom of the hotel. But the elements must have been there for ages."

"What I was looking for was something which would involve more drama than *Kids Around Australia*, more actual acting, so there had to be some sort of story. I wanted to write it for Robin — just as *Kids Around Australia* evolved because I wanted to work with John Goden — so it was essential to



Robyn Archer

think of some sort of human drama between two women."

"At the same time, I thought it would be interesting to look at two older women. I suppose it is as you get older yourself that you realise the value of talking to older women about their experiences."

"And then the carnival thing... I knew the odd came because Dad was in showbusiness. I remember the wife of an old vaudeville in Adelaide called Pearl or Triss or Dolie or something like that. And every time we went down to Glenelg to see the summer carnival, it was always quite hard for Dad to say hello. She would stand there with her pockets and a fag hanging out of her mouth, a rough-old sheshah."

These general ideas sent Archer digging back further, not only into her

own memories, but those of Bob Hudson's wife Kerry and of Jim Sherman, both of whom were born into sideshow alley. She remembered the traumatic childhood experience of finding her local sideshow attractions stripped of their familiar "treks" — the pygmies and the half-man-half-women — and their steady decline since then. From Kerry and Jim, she built up a background of the alley people's determination to get their children out and educate them for something better, of the camaraderie and of the resentment when someone pulled out the feeling that they were letting down an area of showbusiness that was all too quickly being replaced by payout machines.

From these, and anecdotes her mother told her of young women in war time, she has sketched the

characters of Pearl and Trice, two sideshow alley veterans in their late fifties. They were at their peak in the 1960s, in the days of ankle socks and carousing in the dark corners of the alley, and their memories of that time still shape their outlook and appearance. In the *Adelaide Festival* production, directed by Pam Brighton, Archer plays Trice, who is a bit bushy and sees herself as totally

permeated between them. They talk nostalgically about the past bursting into song about a dozen times.

and despairingly of the future for sideshow alley people. They carry the reasons for the collapse of their business, pointing accusatorily fingers at an anonymous Royal Agricultural Society that could be the one running the Royal Show in any of our capital cities.



Robin Nevin

independent. But in reality, she is less radical and more dependent than Pearl (played by Nevin), who did the normal conventional thing of getting married and having children.

Trice is more the sentimentalist, aligning herself with the man of the show but having none of that admirable female rationale that some of those wonderful women do have. Pearl is actually the red-ragger; Archer explains: "Trice is louder-mouthed, but much more the conformist."

Pearl's decision to leave sideshow alley sets the structure of the entertainment, which is basically a two-hander for the women with imaginary crowds and two real innocents, Jerry Wexley and Louis McManus, who will play a selection of violin, accordion, bass, guitar and

"The whole bloody show's run by farmers...

"Clean it up, clean it up

"Clean it up, clean it up,

"Clean up sideshow alley on behalf of the nation.

"The national good don't want no truck with aberration...

"Get rid of bearded ladies and gooky foreign races,

"The RAS is from the clean wide open spaces."

Trice points out the RSA policy changes that first of all outlawed freaks and then forced the carriers back off their "stands", the little stages set from where they would attract their audiences by performing a tantalising segment of their show. "Protruding extremities into the path of the public" were no longer allowed.

At the time I talked to Archer and

Nevin, only one of the show's songs had been heard publicly — the "Backyard Abortion Waltz". This had been well received with the encouraging comment that it was taking women's issues at a contemporary level, but exposing them in music that sounded as though it was from the forties. "And it does depend on that a bit, as in making our view on a situation those women wouldn't have a view on."

Archer had put the script away for two months in order to come to it as a performer rather than the author. "I don't know how I would feel about going into a two-hander when the other person had written it. I want Pam Brighton to take it as a director, almost as if I hadn't written the script. I'd like to be as critical of it as I would be of anyone else's work."

They were both looking forward to being directed by a woman for the first time. But would the sex of the director really make a difference?

"I don't know whether it is important or not," says Archer. "But it might turn out to be very interesting, Pam providing the kind of sympathy for the material that a male director wouldn't have."

Nevin expands that view. "That is a problem I have come up against a lot in the theatre working with men who simply don't have the understanding of the roles that have been written for the women. It can be very difficult. They tend not to trust the actress, certainly in my experience, that has been the case — and I usually feel very strongly than I know I just want to show them what I feel about a character, and then they can decide, but they tend to leap in at an early stage of rehearsal and tell you what to do."

The production of *Songs From Sideshow Alley* has been pared down to depend on its people — no fancy sets or elaborate staging effects to go array. Brian Thomson is providing an all-purpose back-cloth, Anna Senni is finding the costumes, Jamie Lewis is doing the lighting.

Archer looks on benignly and Nevin is a vaudeville team putting their act together — and she is determined to increase her knowledge of straight acting in the process. "I haven't got time to go to NIDA, though I need to..."

Neil Fitzpatrick

Neil Fitzpatrick talks to Ray Stanley

Neil Fitzpatrick, appearing in the Melbourne Theatre Company's production of Peter's *Seventeen* since last September, would surely qualify for inclusion on any short list of this country's top actors. Despite lack of media exposure (he hates being interviewed), as a regular performer in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide, he is better known generally than many whose work is restricted to one city.

Fitzpatrick is an actor whose work always satisfies, it rarely says in anything less than "qualify", who conscientiously builds up each characterisation into something refreshingly original (without aid of disguises) and never resorts to mannerisms.

His professional career began in 1956, playing opposite Dulcie Gray in *Tea And Sympathy* for the late Garnet H. Carroll. He then resuted another offer from the Carroll management, preferring to remain in Melbourne for some two years, learning about radio work (an actor's bread and butter in those days).

Next came a part in J C Williamson Theatres' production of *Not As We Look* with Edwin Styke and Sophie Stewart and, apart from a Philip Street revue, Fitzpatrick has not worked in commercial theatre since.

"It's mainly because the commercial theatre became of less importance to the working actor," he says, recalling John Sumner's Union Theatre Repertory Company was employing professional actors and the Trust Players had been formed.

He worked in the fourth season of Sumner's company, joined the Trust Players (he is somewhat peevish now of the obtrusive notices on the Elizabethan Theatre mentioned the Trust Player's occupancy of it), and also did another stint in 1961-62 with the UTRC. In 1964 he went to England where he worked at the National Theatre.

Returning to this country in 1969, Fitzpatrick has since played mainly with the Old Tote, Nimrod, MTC and State Theater Company of South

Australia.

It is a contemporary part rather than the classics that this actor has made his mark and when, despite his playing Parolles in Tyrone Guthrie's production of *All's Well That Ends Well* for the MTC, I pointed out he seemingly had attempted few of the major Shakespearean roles, it was to discover that he was disillusioned in that respect.

He was Horatio to Tim Eliot's Hamlet for the Old Tote soon after returning, and says the Senate Theatre was a terrible venue. Two years later, as Brutus in *Julius Caesar*,



he found the acoustics of the Sir John Clancy Auditorium far from satisfactory. Topping the came his Macbeth in an experimental production of Rex Chapman's which, after much energy and soul-searching, was greeted by jeers from school children at performances after performances.

Then John Bell approached him to play Malvolio in his production of *Twelfth Night* for the Nimrod and because he has a high regard for Bell, Fitzpatrick accepted. His performance was modelled on silent film comic

Buster Keaton; designer Kim Carpenter had come up with a photograph of Keaton, and the role was taken from there.

Fitzpatrick admits he would like to play in Chekhov (he never has), Show testify in his career he was in *Man And Superman* and *Camelot* and then he did play the middle-aged Peer Gynt in the STCSA production.

He admits to a great satisfaction at appearing in Australian plays.

"In *The Department* it was a revelation to just stand on stage in a play which really didn't appeal to me greatly on the page. To have the challenge of doing a part which I didn't feel suited for, to push myself into a shape I didn't think was me, was wonderful in itself. But then to stand in front of an audience and just feel them open up totally!"

Productions of local plays which have a successful premiere in one city, Fitzpatrick feels should be seen by the rest of the country.

"I am so sick and tired of having seen three or four different productions of the same Australian play happening in eighteen months all over Australia. I know economically it works not that way, but to me it's a disservice to the growth of the Australian theatre in total—that is actors, directors and writers."

Much could be done, Fitzpatrick feels, to have more national interest in the theatre, pointing out that even actors frequently are unaware of what is happening in other cities or what fellow actors are doing.

"Maybe once every two years there could be some sort of grant for a company of absolutely the best available players from each state. They would have to be prepared sometimes to sacrifice their home lives to be part of such a project, to join the repertory in each state in a company for two or three interesting plays presented in each of the capital cities around Australia for six months—the opera and ballet—as a showcase."

Many people will certainly agree there is a need for such a company. And there is little doubt it would have to include actor Neil Fitzpatrick.

It's Thring with hair!



By Katherine Brisbane

In contrast to the brooding air of the rehearsal room, the atmosphere in the nearby administrator's office of the Sydney Theatre Company's new premises on Dowling Street, Point Piper, was joyful. It was the lunch break of Simon Gray's *Close of Play*, and we were waiting for Frank Thring. He was in the wardrobe, we were told, and might never come out.

This proved untrue. Quite soon he emerged, in his characteristic black shirt and gold chain.

"What on earth," I asked酸ously, "possessed you to come and play in dreadful Sydney?"

"I thought you'd never ask," he replied. "As one of our national critics you will find it very interesting that this is the first time I have actually been asked to play in Sydney. I've worked here, of course, in productions for J. C. Williamson and Garrett Carroll, but these have been touring productions. No one has had enough sense to actually ring me up and say 'Do you want to come and play so and so? Until now—and, of course, I am enchanted to be in at the opening of a new theatre company. Which is why I'm here working for nothing."

"Do you think," said Ruth Cracknell, his fellow actor sitting at the

table, "that this is the big breakthrough that some of us here might actually be asked to go to Melbourne? It's a quid pro quo, you know."

"Have you ever been invited to take part in a Melbourne production?" I asked her.

"Well, right at the beginning of the Union Rep. But, well, no. Not really."

"You'd have noticed?"

"I think I'd have noticed."

"Senior actors in the country don't seem to be given the responsibility for the success or failure of a show that they do in other countries," I remarked. "You don't often see a play mounted as a vehicle for an actor, nor does there seem to be genuine consultation."

Ruth. Yes, you're right about that. Frank. I disagree completely.

Ruth. A little of the problem is the amount of time you get to rehearse. The directors are busy on other things before they start rehearsal and it all happens so quickly. So you find that either you have a fight or you are persuaded—perhaps a different result might come from consultation. You don't think so?"

Frank. No, no no. You know how difficult John Sumner is—but talk about every aspect of casting, design and so on. And, one is delighted to say, that one has given one's best performances under Sumner's very, very strict direction.

Ruth. Which is why he has remained so successful for so long. I think Richard Wherren is going to give this sort of feeling to this company. I'm quite committed. But you are right in saying that this hasn't happened all that much in Sydney, anyway. Frank. It's been happening with me in Melbourne for twenty-five years with Sumner, who is, as you know, Queen Evil.

"May I quote you, Frank?" I asked.

"Of course. Haven't you read my preface to that miserable book on the MTC by Geoffrey Huston? Sumner is really a remarkable man."

Frank Thring is one of the rare exceptions in the Australian theatre—an actor who has held his status as star in the workaday world of company life, who during the 50s and 60s when London and Hollywood were still the goals of every actor, managed to hold his place in both cities while preferring to make his home in Melbourne.

I tried to talk to him about his Gary in the MTC's *The Cherry Orchard*—one of the most touching performances I can remember. "I want to be second best," he said momentarily contemplative, and then, "And you'll be delighted to hear that I'm wearing the same wig in *Close of Play*. I thought, everybody's bored with the shark-fin hat and if I'm going to sit in the middle of the stage all night, let's have Frank Thring with hair!"

So we talked of the Simon Gray play instead. His role is not that of a villain this time. "In fact I'm absolutely charming, considering I have no dialogue." He plays the imposing but silent father figure whose presence draws each member of the family in turn into self-correlation. "It's not an easy play. There's nobody quite sure what it's all about. So consequently we all bring our own versions, rehearsal sessions are very argumentative."

I asked Ruth Cracknell what she thought about Simon Gray. She plays the adopted mother of the family.

"Simon Gray is writing something which is terribly, terribly painful, not only in a personal way but in a national. It may be very painful, I think, to be a writer in England now—and Britain is turning out some amazing plays—because it is reflected in their work. Every comedy, black or otherwise, has this edge of pain to it."

"What do you think the play's about?"

"I think," said Ruth, "that it's all about depravation."

"Oh," said Frank, archly. "Is that what you think?"

"It's all about love and the way it has never been given at the right moment."

"There, you see," said Frank, "why we fight all the time?"

When we passed the rehearsal room, the director, Rodney Fisher and the rest of the cast were hunched in armchairs, brooding again. Fisher has just returned from meeting Gary in London. He did not reveal to me what secrets he had learnt there.



Acting Out: The White Devil

ADLA FEST

By Director, Christopher Hunt

Theatre dominates the programme of the 1988 Adelaide Festival, a contrast with recent years in which music has tended to dominate festival programme planning.

There are twenty-one new production festivals twenty-three days (March 7-29), and that doesn't include seventeen ballets, two operas, a variety of late-night cabaret and many other elements that are at least marginally connected with the theatre.

The programme is deliberately balanced evenly between Australian productions and overseas visiting companies and artists. Australia has so far, perhaps inevitably, been placed very much on the foreign imports, with the first Australian visit of Peter Brook's Paradesized company as a special highlight. But the balance has been planned to display both sides. The touchstone in choosing which companies to invite from abroad (apart from the fundamental question of availability) has been companies that have performing conditions parallel to those that may be found in Australia, so that the ideas and approaches of each company may have the most direct possible relevance to theatre in Australia today. As with the rest of the festival's programme, a second element has been easier to find productions which would be rewarding for those who are professionally involved in theatre in

this country, but not so exotic as to be meaningless to a general audience.

Adelaide drama and youth productions are important in the festival therefore, but the most important events for theatre-goers are likely to be the remainder of the drama programme. On the native side there are new productions from the Melbourne Theatre Company, Alan Rusch's new play *Big River*, set on the River Murray at the turn of the century and reflecting specifically the underlying themes of the whole festival, which is turning out to explore through the arts, Aspects of Change and Man's reaction to Change; and the Sydney Theatre Company will present a Romantic musical *For Getting Me All Together and Taking It On The Road*. The gristy rock operetta, which was one of the unexpected success stories of New York during the past two years, take place in a cabaret club somewhere in America where the heroine Heather is celebrating her 39th birthday and the final rehearsals for her come-back after years of retreating since her early success as a middle-of-the-road singing star of the 60s. But in the meantime she has become a troubled but determined supporter of Women's Lib and the play portrays what happens during the rehearsals when her former lover and road-manager, who has set up her come-back tour, leaves and is appalled by the new songs she proposes to sing.

Two productions are books presented by the Festival itself. Robyn Archer's fine full-length show in which she has written songs, lyrics and dialogue. It is a two-woman show which Robyn Archer will perform with Robyn Nevin, directed by Pam Brighton. Set in the present against a backdrop of a seedy foreground alley, Nevin and Archer portray two women who have worked opposite each other for forty years.

The second Festival production is the much-discussed Australian premiere of Tom Stoppard's *Andrei Previn's* "play for actors and orchestra" *Even Good Boys Deserve Favour*. An example of Stoppard's dancing wit *EGDF* also reveals that strong current of social and political protest that runs through all his work, however often it is concealed by the surface pyrotechnics.

For the first time two of Adelaide's alternative theatre companies are included in the official programme of the festival, and both will present new works commissioned for the occasion. Troupe, at the Red Shed, have a new work by David Alkin and Donn Clarke called *Coppiola and Company*, a critical and entertaining look at the origins of commercial theatre in Australia which revolves around the theatrical empire that Costin, 19th century actor and entrepreneur, bequeathed to J.C. Williamson and the Stage Company will present a new

ADLA THEATRE

music by Ken Ross with Brian Debram directing. *London and his Pals* is a portrait of the life and times of Norman Lindsay. It will open in the newly Price Hall Theatre in the Centre for Performing Arts where the Stage Company is to be resident drama company.

Adelaide's State Theatre Company will, as in the past, present two major new productions in their home, the Playhouse Theatre in the Festival Centre beside the Torrens Lake. Colm George has gone back to the earliest sources of European drama to create a four-hour spectacle based on the Wakefield Mystery Plays, that fascinating cycle of unrepeatable, yet powerful drama that developed out of English medieval traditions of street theatre and continued to be performed through until the disappearance of the Anglican government of Elizabeth I ended the run just 400 years ago.

The State Theatre Company's second production reflects another major aspect of Festival planning throughout the three weeks: there is to be a sequence of productions specially for children, with the Scott Theatre on the campus of Adelaide University given over entirely to young people's performances. The STC as their contribution to this side of the festival is presenting Carlo Goldoni's *King Seagull*, adapted by Nick Bright. A classic 18th century master of Commedia dell'Arte and farce, *King Seagull*

is set in the mythical land of Scandip, and will be designed by Richard Roberts with Tony Strachan and Edwin Hodgson joining members of the Maggie Company at both schools matinee and evening family performances.

In the Scott Theatre the young people's programme runs for the full three weeks of the festival, opening with the Australian premiere of Peter Maxwell Davies' opera *The Two Puddins* which Davies wrote in 1978 for performances entirely by children, both on stage and in the pit. It is directed by Helmut Katalin of St Mary's Youth Arts Centre in Melbourne, and the production designer is self-styled former woodkid Nigel Tatters.

The Scott's second week offers what is probably the first visit ever to Australia by an adult theatre company specialising solely in performances for young people, the French company Théâtre des Jeunes Acteurs, with a fable *Terre et Soleil* (*Les Loups de Sibérie*) that explores through the formalised mimics of Grand-Guignol the way in which children are conditioned in early life to accept the traditional role-playing of Breadwinner-father and Housewife-mother, and yet manage to be humorous while concealing its didactic content.

The last week in the Scott presents two Australian plays, both given by

the Melbourne St. Mary's Youth Arts Centre company: Michael Minchener directs *Zig and Zag Father*, a show for small children based on the television characters of the late '70s; and Helmut Katalin directs *Cow's Hand*, a winner of the recent Gothic Institute play competition, which explores for teenage audiences the problems of bereavement in suburbia in Australia (or any other urban environment for that matter) when fantasy can all too dangerously turn into attempted reality as teenagers seek for imagined thrills to enliven dead weekends.

Finally, on the Australian side, there is a new show from Patrick Cook and the Marionette Theatre of Australia directed by Richard Bradshaw, *Captain Lazar and his Earthbound Crew* is a savagely funny political satire that is quite definitely not the children-love-puppets kind of theatre with which marionette theatre is too often confused.

So to the overseas content, headed most obviously by the first Australian visit of Peter Brook's Paris-based company, the Centre for International Research. Brook needs no introduction to serious theatre-goers to whom he has been an all-incomparable legend for the past twenty years. But it is surprising perhaps that the vast majority of the public know little about the pivotal figure in twentieth century theatre, and the chance to see three of his



Brook's *Confession of the Birds*

recent productions in Adelaide they play in a disused quarry, typical of Brook's determination to get away from conventional theatre surroundings and reactions. The CICT will present Brook's version of *Ubu*, a compilation from the first two of the *Ubu* trilogy, this will be given in French with a liberal sprinkling of English that should give non-French speaking audiences all the clues they need to follow the ludicrous antics of Peer Ubu. Their second production, *The R*, justly celebrated in theatre folklore, should (like the first production) have an overwhelming impact in the starkly beautiful surroundings of the quarry. Based on Colm Tóibín's book *The Ministry People*, *The R* concerns the total disintegration of an African tribe who have been denied their traditional existence as hunters and left to starve. It is a frightening parable for our times.

Finally, Brook brings his most recent production, that is also unique in his repertory, since it is a theme that has both guided his search for theatrical reality for a generation and stands as a metaphor for his search and indeed Al Mankowitz's search for Truth. *The Conference of the Birds*, which was performed at the 1979 Avignon Festival, depicts with wondrous beauty and power an epic and hazardous journey undertaken by a congress of birds whose flight symbolises the obstacles that beset the human soul in its unending search for ultimate truth. The title and origin of the piece stems from the epic poem of the 12th century Persian mystic Farid

Uddin Attar.

If Brook's three productions are sure to send much of the theatrical thunder of the festival, the other overseas productions are in fact no less interesting. The nearest of them to more-or-less conventional theatre is the Acting Company of New York, now the resident dramatic troupe at the new theatre in the Kennedy Centre in Washington DC. Founded by John Houseman, the Acting Company is the only permanent touring repertory company in the United States and has been the breeding ground for numerous distinguished theatre figures in the States. Mainly drawn from former students of the Juilliard School of Drama, the company will give two productions in Adelaide as part of their Australian tour. One of these, a horrifying modern-dress, punk-oriented version of Webster's violent drama *The White Devil*, will be seen only in Adelaide. Directed by Michael Kahn, it is sure to cause one of the festival's customary outbursts from the conservative elements of the city's population, though the relevance of its sceptic view of society is of course made all the more pointed by transferring its time to the present without, however, altering a word of the original text. The second Acting Company production will be by Romanian director Liviu Ciulei, who is remembered in Australia for his one previous production here, a notable *Lover's Discourse* in Sydney in 1977. He has chosen a superb vehicle for his own special brand of theatrical directness, Paul Foster's semi-abstract drama *Elizabeth I*, in which numerous scenes hover between reality and imagination as a troupe of different actors prepare to present a play about Elizabeth.

The two remaining repertory offerings from overseas are both closely linked to the most recent developments in theatre both in Europe and the USA. From New York comes Nicanor Mires, perhaps the most extraordinary of all the off-off-Broadway companies. Their production of *Howard Like An Egg*, based on the writings of Coleridge, reflects both the company's origins as a visual art performance troupe, and their interest in getting away from all conventional theatrical habits. A ghostly happening which contrasts rapidly formal, surreal movements

and images with a plainly naturalistic text, Egg parallels the conflicts within Coleridge's own writings of feminist intellect and feminine emotion. With a specially composed score by Philip Glass, and props and costumes designed by several of New York's most significant younger artists, Egg has won accolades from all the critics in New York. Among the principals of the highly-cooperative company is English experimental actor David Warrilow, a noted exponent of Beckett's drama and for whom Beckett has recently written a new piece, *Mossofogwe*, which Warrilow premiered in New York at the very end of 1979.

Paralleling Mabou Mines from Europe comes the Catalan company of La Clàscia ('The Claque') with a unique event called *Mors de Merce*, roughly translated as 'Death to the Buggerman'. La Clàscia is a young company and mine company based on the traditions of Catalan street theatre and *Muriel Merce*, which is a loosely based version of *Ubu Roi* (given by Brook in the Festival) reveals those origins in its wordless (but not silent) pantomime possible of auto-fascism. The special interest that attaches to the production is that the great Spanish painter Joan Miró designed and painted himself all the immense and wonderful figures in or out of which the actors appear on the stage. Like a grotesque Miró painting come to life, the performance is a fierce denunciation of Dictatorship, and was the first such piece to play in Spain after Franco's death.

So from medieval wells, theatre one comes full circle to Brook and La Clàscia. Each play or event makes some kind of comment on change, either through contrasting youth and age or through the forces of revolution. It is not necessary to see or realise the underlying thematic links, but they are there to be found if one wants, in a programme that sets out overall to cover the best representative examples of theatre today in Australia and within the American-European tradition, wherever it seemed to me to have most probably relevance to the possible forms of dramatic enterprise in the next decade. It is a programme that deliberately looks back at the past while perhaps pointing a way forward for theatre in the '80s.

WRITERS' VIEW

TOM KENEALLY



This is a new play, since 1972, when *Black Can Return to the Theatre* at JAM?

The very serious purpose of trying to write a good play. Noveltists don't have a very good record as playwrights, to say that is a truism. There are a few exceptions.

There is Patrick White, there is Gunther Uecker, yet in both cases the novels are more successful than the plays and the novels are what they are likely to be remembered for. This is no accident because an entirely different discipline operates with the novel than operates in writing for the theatre.

Since 1972 and *An AWFUL Rose* I've been promising myself that I would make another attempt at writing a play, but I'd had enough getting a novel written within a year. I suppose I was more anxious of the accolades both in terms of its artistic and financial rewards than I was of the theatre. And since 1972, the massive impact of David Williamson has occurred in the theatre, in fact *An AWFUL Rose* opened at

June Street with the David Williamson's always adulated work for its sure wit, for the way it engages an audience, resonates with Australians both culturally and as entertainment, but I can't write like Williamson. Even if I tried, Williamson's style of writing took audiences into a different discourse than I was working in.

The fact that a new play called *Belle's Master* is appearing in 1984 is, like most of these things, contingent and accidental. About eighteen months ago I read of an incident in the Northern Territory where some aborigines decided to create a rapprochement between black and white by bringing forth certain secret objects called *Ranga*. The *Ranga* had never willingly been shown to white men and no white man had seen them since the Dreaming without being subject to death penalties. In case this proposition sounds fantastic and objectionable, one only has to remember that as late as 1978, in the Williams case in

SA, a tribal aborigine was accused of in charge of murdering his wife on the grounds that he killed her in the expectation that she was about to divulge tribal secrets.

The name of the central character in the play is *Belle* and his house, which has been blown away by a freak wind, is of course a handy symbol for the instability of the relationship between the two races. *Belle* believes he will not be able to rebuild until he brings forth the *Ranga* and displays them to the whites. He believes that the technological inequality between which and blacks is due entirely to the fact that the whites are keeping their *Ranga* from them, as constantly as he is keeping his from them. After a perverse soul-searching, he brings them forth expecting an overwhelming response from white society. In fact he gets nothing and the segregated aborigines become so demorphologised that the women of the settlement end up using them as clothes drying poles. His fellow elders turn on him

and one of them murders him because he has so faithfully given away the last remaining sacred possessions of his people.

To return to the question of *Wolf*, on the middle of last year I called Ken Harler and told him that I had dreamt up the story he based on incidents that are recorded by the anthropologist R. M. Brandt in a monograph called "An Adjustment Movement in Arnhem Land". I asked him if there was any particular time that it would be most convenient for the Natives to receive a script like that and he told me that there was a space available in February 1980. The play was therefore written to meet that deadline, that had no effect, however, on the ultimate quality or coherence of the play, but it created problems for Ken Harler, the director.



Trevor Judd

When a民族 has done so much to play the segregation is for him to do it in the way he writes novels — it's to be both a little woolly and to wanting the action to make place on a monitor inside his brain. The problem is that because of the different disciplines I spoke of earlier, the novelist's monitor is a different sort of monitor to the playwright's and when the play went into rehearsal I learned so much so quickly from being a flunked out in the most elementary way, that I realised it was necessary to re-write it instantly.

For the first two weeks of the rehearsal I rewrote — rehearsal just by rehearsal and — just getting it ready in time to meet rehearsal schedules. I think the play as

now stands is immensely better than the one I wrote as my novelist's cerebral monitor before I ever saw it read, or honestly acted, in black and white actors

For a while earlier of the discussion that the Australian drama had taken over Williamson and that one could not move much in that direction. Could you expand on that?

You'd very much like to be able to work like Williamson. I can remember the impact of *Don's Perri*, the touching gratitude of the audience on having themselves identified on stage. Something of a new experience for Australians. It happened with *The God*, but *The God* was still sort of Henry Lawson territory, and it was about men from the bush who were slightly larger than the suburban variety. Larger and more mythical, whereas Williamson's people are identifiably the Australian middle class who are the people that attend the plays. I can still remember the thrill of identification that the people had so recently ago as 1972 when Williamson's work made its largest impact in Sydney. A number of instances of Williamson have since taken the Australian drama into the direction of a number of little social vignettes with quick situations and quick pay off lines and that's not of play that not only I cannot write, but I do not want to write either.

Words are important to me, not just as implements to make an audience laugh. The heard soliloquies young men in the Natives but speak of drama as if you have to make a choice between actions and words, as if the prime form of play is action which there is only action. Might I say that this is not only naive, but more often falsehood. You cannot speak of words as if they were not human actions. It is a dangerous proposition that young playwrights seem to have picked up, probably from teachers who should know better, that there is a tension in a play, in fact something like a tension between words and action. I think words are among the best of human actions and I see no conflict.

I do recognise the problem in earlier drafts of *Baker's House* that the words are too expansive, too little supported by the action, but I hope as I speak to you here the day before the play opens, that by now, the words of the play are adequately and dramatically supported by what actually happens in the play.

Do you have plans for further plays?

Yes I would certainly like to attempt a comedy. This afternoon I am taking off to America where, amongst other things I am preparing a workshop which will lead to a production later this year based on my novel *Passenger*. *Passenger* is the journal of an unborn child. It's rather a whacky and crazy novel and I'd like that the people at the *Mark Taper* Theatre in Los

Angeleno like to qualify. They want to make it a musical.

The problem of the central character, at least the narrator, being unborn is not great one. Before they wrote to me I had already been tempted to write it as a play and I saw that the unborn child could be a little, adult actor sitting in a captain above the action, commanding interacting perhaps and also singing songs about his parents, about the extra-terrestrial world. Well, that is something that I would dearly like to turn into a decent play. If, of course the *Mark Taper* people do it and it is successful then I hope it would get an Australian production.

There are other projects in mind as well, but a novelist has to be careful approaching theatre, not only because



Trevor Judd

the monitor in his brain is a little different, but also because he must be careful that he gives the play adequate time and attention. Most novelists tend to look on a play as a sort of easy novel, a novel with the purple prose cut out and only the dialogue left in. It's a dangerous proposition, with which I began the writing of a play, but it's the sort of proposition under which I probably wrote *Halfcrown*, *Charlotte Rose* and *An Angel's Rose*.

If Baker's House is better than either of those earlier plays then it will be because *Baker's House* was written as a play in its own right. It was given the attention a play should get. It was not treated as a poorer sibling of the novels.

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The presence of modern Britain

By Irving Wardle

Should news of the Holt Truck Company not yet have sped round the globe, I should explain that this is an outfit set up in 1971 by Mike Bradwell to specialize in a genre then new to Britain, the improvised play.

The products like Bradwell's *House* which rapidly put Holt on the national theatre map, have nothing in common with roisterous off-the-cuff improvisation. In fact they are a complete reversal of the roisterous procedure of working out a scenario to collect a group of stock characters.

Bradwell's method is to sit—each member of his company to privately decide on a character and develop a credibility in minute detail, and only then to bring the company together and yet about developing dramatic circumstances to accommodate whatever random figures the action happens to have created.

Besides the first of work the company have also begun making one-act plays, and it so happens that two titles of the Bradwell operation have lately been previewed at his regular London base, the Bush—an extremely pleasant pub theatre in Shepherd's Bush.

Halfway, a septet piece by the novelist Peter Timms-wood, tells the bad story of Shirley and Julian, an estranged couple who have adopted a parasite in the hope of subduing their unruly, unruly relationship. Wilfred, the dog, promptly "daggers" the parasite, of their pet's abdomen, by dropping mud pellets throughout the plot and going on to savagely the Christmas turkey having the assembled family dining on glazed-beef hash. For the last twenty minutes, I reckoned this the best British farce. Then comes a scene on the common where Julian brings a sick for Wilfred who abhors it, whereas his master recognises him as a kindred soul. Why snarl after success? Why get married? Why pretend to care for people? Man and dog are two of a kind.

Commissioned by Bradwell, the play makes extraordinary use of stage invisibility, most obviously in the case of Wilfred himself who dominates an evening in which he only appears for thirty seconds

at the end. But not only Wilfred is invisible, so is one of the Christmas guests, and so are even the visible characters when they have no active role. This is the first stage play I have seen that explores the advantages of radio drama by letting things that can be better imagined for the spectator to fill in for himself. And Bradwell's directorial trademark is again in the performances (especially Philip Jackson's Harry, snarling Julian) which begin as hard-edged caricatures and develop into fully-detailed realistic portraits.

In *God Is Love*, directed by Bradwell with the company, you see nothing, quality matched to the full by improvisation. As usual, the piece offers a fractured narrative with several groups of characters, including Bradwell a central theme. And—unusual, there is an expanded locale, this time an Northern university town where the action shifts between a matriculation hall, a lecture theatre, a library, a school, and a folk club, to see the characters' professional and personal lives of the community interwoven in some parallel. There are three main groups: a middle-aged scholar-cum-edited by a mainly discontinued daughter, a schoolteacher whose wife is on the point of leaving him, and two working-class students whose last-riding break-up when the boy makes a pass. But the most dramatic agent is Martin (Stephen Wankoff), a young political science lecturer who brings the same coolly detached manner to outlining the forces of the revolutionary French Revolution to bedding the teacher's wife and the young girl students.

Most of these people have some kind of Catholic background as a refuge from British snobbery. They should be told to make no accusations for the future (as is also, as it is the company's method to develop a language of truistic individual stories in the hope that they will gravitate towards a moral centre). We get closest to such a centre where the Glasgow student erupts into an enraged tirade on Anglo-American history only to run into Martin's academic nose-wallow. Scenes for some decent shades of sexual and intellectual significance show a deadly familiarity with the groves of provincial audience, and are played with an extraordinary capacity for charging social stereotypes with an intensely personal sub-text. It is a long time since I felt the presence of modern Britain so strongly from a British stage.

Otherwise the New Year has brought in the latest Ayckbourn in the shape of a subtle musical, *Suburban Sonata* (Scarborough), in which the lame Ayckbourn trick is to equip his theatre in

the round with a concrete double roulette, and Howard Barker's *The Love of a Good Man*, a long raspberry at the expense of the Pass-the-parcel obsequies which tell lies at the Royal Court after collecting admiring opinions in the provinces. But the most charming discovery so far is that of Riaz Kureshi, a first generation Anglo-Pakistani author, whose *For King And Mr (Soho Poly)* shows an Eva-obsessed wife going bananas in a Council flat, and shows a powerful young talent going straight for the target and hitting it with a bang.

Hellman, Pinter And Babe

By Karl Levett

New York is currently offering a trio of prizefighting playwrights: Lillian Hellman, a champion of women past, Harold Pinter, a present powerhouse, and Thora Hird, a contender for future honour. The current co-existence of the trio on Broadway and Off-Broadway provides an opportunity for an interesting comparison of changing styles.

Lillian Hellman has been the most vigilante watchdog of her own plays, any production requiring her personal approval. So Hellman's play such as the 1961 *Watch On The Rhine* is something of an event.

The Long Wharf Theatre of New Haven, Connecticut, under the direction of Anne Ripley, is considered one of the best of America's regional theatres. The Long Wharf has proved a faithful source for Broadway and several of its productions have transferred to Broadway with great success, notably David Rabe's *Stevens*, David Storey's *The Changeling* and most recently *O'Neill's All God's Chillun' Got Wings*. Ms Hellman obviously approves of Long Wharf as *Watch On The Rhine* is the second Hellman play the group has produced the first being the seldom-seen *The Autumns of a Artisan* (1976).

Watch On The Rhine opened in 1941 as a strong anti-Nazi statement and demand for American intervention in World War II. It is melodramatic, it is didactic, and yet the experience is surprisingly effective. The Long Wharf production is acceptable, but

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only that — it's unnecessarily moldy and it seems the pacing is quite flat-dated. Therefore the effectiveness of the play must lie elsewhere. Surely it can't be the play's theme? That has to have the label of "Dated" on it you'd think. Yes, but also No. Forty years on, the conflict between complacency at home and potential danger abroad is very much an American mood. And younger commentators have said the play provides a glimpse of America's history no one ever told them about.

Then the Israel world has to be high on Ms. Hellman's writing. To do this one would have to forget those pesky Third Act speeches, the inviolability of the press and the task of poetry everywhere. One would have to deliberately ignore the draft whereby comedy died. There's a surprising amount of cynical flippery, too melodrama and back stage. Hellman's considerable craft is that, although that's essentially theatrical and judiciously, in a presentation stage. For, just, the craft-cooking of the pill was far more remarkable than the pill itself. Not as a young lady would never come. As the Third Act closed she acted quickly but elegantly. Ms. Hellman would have liked her.

Harold Pinter's punching style certainly differs from Lillian Hellman's. American you might say. But if you've been hot at all, you'll know that in admiring the skill of the attack and judicious follow-up Pinter's the real master. His lightning in a product of By Peter Hall and George three leading American performers. Robert Schenkkan, Kyle Gassman and Rose Johnson.

They're Pinter without a profile, an air hearty, and although the play runs two hours, neither Pinter's agents nor

With the backward *devises*, Pinter follows up his line of melodrama, revealing all the characters' multiple betrayals. The frequent onstage's premature exits, those reinforced by John Bury's sets. Everything seems to be at a tangent including the characters' relationships with each other. And, of course, tangents and flashing bursts of photos absent in Pinter's dialogue. Again, the dialogue is a mixture of banal conversations to create a verbal shorthand, with an undercurrent of threat and menace.

Uniformly insouciant flies out the window of the accents measure and in that Mr. Schenkkan is particularly at fault. His

accents crackles volubly without ever arriving in Britain. Those delicate vocal implications that one Breather can be doing on another are lost. Right there, one of America's most versatile young actresses pitches the style best, while still conveying a sense of emotional weight. Her tone is an continuous jazz, quiet, throaty and when the form is maintained the loss is considerable. We are left with Hellman's droll observation, "There's much less here than meets the eye."

Thomas Babe next door to Hellman than Pinter. He's a young American playwright who has been mentored by Joe Papp's Public Theater which has produced five of his plays, all with a measure of success. With his ability to create strong themes in a traditional but fresh manner Babe carries the tag tag of "promising" and "entertaining." His latest effort *Star-Crossed Lovers* (Staged at Shapley Center

is going to the independent 1983 trial of the winter season). Joe Hill, who, it is believed was trained as a stage coach by a Utah-born American playwright, Eugene O'Neill, in 1958 introduced a play on the same subject, *The Moon of the Yellow Bird*, which has played in twelve countries, and, of course, in the repertoire of the London National Theater (Joe Hill was a Souvenir). The transcript of the trial is lost, but Stage's play is a carefully researched, courageous to a hero. Babe seems to have played fast and loose with the facts to create a fastidiously unconvincing scrapbook of a play that neither succeeds as documentary nor as fictional fare.

Babe will get off the floor to fight again. Meanwhile, Pinter looks a champion and it's good to know Hellman can still deliver a worthwhile punch.

Bob Schenkkan and Al the Monitor on the Broadway Bistro.



NATIONAL



DANCE



By William Shakespear

Modern dance in Australia

If there is one thing more encouraging to me than the increased performances of modern dance in the country and the attention and serious discussion that the mystic and slow off the mark process at long last gives it, it lies in the fact that the growing audiences are gradually arriving

at an understanding of the language and language of dance (both classic and modern) that its values and methods are different from those of ordinary theatre and opera and as such dance cannot be seen and judged on the same terms or with the same expectations as the other art forms.

It is obvious that audiences have got to go further than the (and even more evident that certain "critics" and the communication need to travel to), but a beginning has at long last been made.

Modern dance performances on a continuing basis hasn't been around in Australia for very long. 1963, the year that Elizabeth Dutman and Suzanne Moore founded the embryos of companies in Adelaide and Sydney respectively, can for argument's sake, be said to be the birthplace of "Australian" modern dance.

The Queensland, West Australian and Australian Ballets (and the now defunct Ballet Victoria) did from time to time include "modern techniques" pieces in their repertoires, but before 1963 there was no company totally given over to exploring modern dance styles in this country.

While we thank and remember all those people who fought for years to get the style and manner accepted here, the achievements and enormous strides written

the last three years are a complete vindication of their efforts even if they no longer play an active part.

Dance in Australia perhaps more than any other performing art form has come into its own in the last five years or so.

This of course, is no doubt due to the watchfulness and concern of the Artistic Directors both past and present of the Queensland and West Australian Ballets but more so to the careful planning, intelligence and inventiveness of Graeme Murphy and Jonathan Taylor, directors of the Sydney Dance Company and the Australian Dance Theatre respectively.

At a time when the Australian Ballet has lost any real claim to be doing something for contemporary dance in Australia and has lapsed into a \$3 million "operation" exploring in "product", it is these two companies that are getting the real notice and attention of the media and the younger (and in the long run more accurate) audiences.

It is with these companies (just as they are) that the real future of dance in Australia lies. New people and discussions don't really matter at all in these things.

The Australian Ballet remains a "classical" museum (or a sometime repository of curiosities), let the important business of creation be left to the ADT and



The Bush Doctor from *Humanities II*. Photo: Graeme Gutter

SDC, while not of course forgetting the West Australian and Queensland companies since they are becoming quite daring in programming these days considering the lack of finance, conservatism and their tough touring schedules.

Now, to draw a comparison between the scene here in Australia and that in both West and East Berlin is irrelevant. Nothing constructive will come of it and in any case it can hardly be done. The only vague similarity between the two countries could perhaps lie in the fact that for years on the country showed any great interest in home grown choreographic creations, the Germans preferring opera and the Australians well, I don't know what.

That of course has changed dramatically in the last fifteen years. Audiences for all the arts are at an all time high now in Australia and the same is true in the two Germanies. Is the healthiest it has ever been.

But in the field of dance Germany did have individuals almost right from the start of the century constantly working and experimenting and performing. Maria Doleroos and Kurt Jooss are just two of the famous names from that century. Australia, apart from certain teachers like Joanne Preston, Adelaide, had no one who was even acquainted with what was happening in the modern fields of dance creation, and therefore our audiences were kept in the dark.

While it is in some ways surprising that the SDC and ADT are getting such a strong following now, it is even more surprising that they exist at all given the wilderness from which they have sprung.

The greatest influence on dance in Australia, as it is in most parts of the Western world, would have to be the pioneers and experimenters of America, and especially New York. Even since the 1950's when New Yorkers had finally accepted the work of Doris Humphrey, Ted Shawn, Martha Graham and Balanchine, "national evenings" with the NY City Ballet, that city has been the world centre of modern dance. The names that have piled upon the year after year - Jerome Robbins, Merce Cunningham, Paul Taylor, Twyla Tharp, Meredith Monk, Robert Wilson and further legions of avant garde performers.

Europe has witness the rise of Ballet Rambeau, London Contemporary Dance Theatre, Northern Ballet Theatre and the Wuppertal Dance Theatre among others.

Australia, because of distance and expense has had little chance to see any of these companies at first hand and the style of dance they perform. What it has had is that style as translated and incorporated by its own choreographers.

In some ways this is poor because audiences should be exposed to the quite



Carolee Schneemann's *Performance* (Dobie Dance Company). Photo: Brian Easdale

available) tradition that surrounds the term to see the way that it made a break with the constraints and attitudes of the classic dance and grew into a whole different manner and type of movement. On the other hand what audiences are now getting is a watered down version of that dance style something that has its roots in this country and cannot be said to be an import.

Numerous visitors from overseas have remarked that the dance scene here is amazingly strong when one takes the overall population into account.

The real area of Australia's arts scene are exposed to dance. The ADT especially has one of the most thorough and expansive country touring schedules

of any performing art company in the country.

Every state has a professional dance company of some description and Sydney has an addition to the five month Australian Ballet season and the resident SDC, at least two fringe groups that regularly put on performances attended by ever enlarging audiences.

None of these companies or choreographers is working in a vacuum however, they all have certain backgrounds from here and overseas (teaching or otherwise).

Jonathan Taylor, while his background is that of Ballet Rambeau, has been concerningly attempting to understand the Australia (as of trend and attitude) in some

of his works *Verdins At Bell Creek* and *The Wedding* for example.

Graeme Murphy is a dancer that he and his company create, consulting for Australian audiences, reflecting them as well as his own personality. Murphy's *Reveries* was a fascinating and keenly observed work about Sydney life, portrayed in a series of telling vignettes. *Poppy* was a dance theatre "event" on Bean Curd that gave a new sophistication and intelligence to Murphy's company.

There are Australian works because they were created in Australia and, in the case of the latter two, curated by Australians. Some of them are Australian by virtue of patriotic attitude or patriotic tub-thumping, audiences have accepted and rejoiced in that, illustrating again the expanded aesthetic that has at last gained ground.

Music and dance are probably the two performing art forms that cannot be really bound by national borders, even if, in the case of dance, it may try to analyse the pecked marked face and interior mind of its country of origin. Australian modern dance realises that its creations are to be placed alongside the works of anything from creation and judged accordingly. What they say and how well they say it is dependent entirely on their choreographers.

There is not yet a distinctive "Australian" choreography, there is Graeme Murphy's style or Jonathan Taylor's style, or whatever else may create, and one must also be wary of pinning them

down too snugly since every creator is liable to make a volte-face and change his/her mind — it keeps them and their audiences healthily aware.

There has been talk lately of completely changing the dance set-up in Australia. Mention made of aligning the SDC with the Australian Opera and the Australian Ballet with the Victorian Opera so that all four companies can have access to both art forms as well as a resident orchestra. This may sound promising. SDC performances would be wonderful in the Opera Theatre housed by an orchestra and all the set costume administration facilities at its command. But there is a danger always (as we have already seen) of Boards pulling their teeth at their artistic directions.

I'm sure that Graeme Murphy and his board would not wish to be enveloped by the Australian Opera board, with the possibility then that they might be treated merely as an adjunct and their resources (including their Federal and State funding) exploited. No, the SDC board is far too forward looking for that. They, almost alone in boards of management of the fine arts in Australia, are fully supportive of whatever Murphy and his fellow choreographers want to attempt.

It is for this reason that the SDC is a new phenomenon in Australia. Fewer than the ADT, the SDC is adventurous. At one with Graeme Murphy it is least willing to put itself on the line and risk failure.

People said that any attempt at a full length ballet (in modern style), especially when dealing with comment so unfamiliar

as Joan Chastain, would be a failure and the company would be on the brink of disaster. That has not proved to be the case if anything *Poppy* has brought the company greater success and larger audiences and the same goes for the trilogy, *Reveries*.

That again was a complete breakaway from new territory and diverse and woolly as it is in place, can take its place in something by which Sydney people feel at home. Australians in general can see themselves reflected. This year, Murphy will be trying again something different in tackling a heavy work of ballet (again that has been the downfall of most than one choreographer in its time, Ravel's *Boléro* and *Cléor*).

The ADT on the other hand is dealing with a huge potential audience, by virtue of serving both South Australian and Victoria. What more, it is getting those audiences in, especially in the country areas. With a young and well-trained company of enthusiastic dancers, the possibilities for improvement and expansion are almost limitless.

This year the ADT will be featuring at the Edinburgh Festival (probably taking *Rehearsals* and a single full programme) and thence probably on to a regional tour of Britain.

The only other Australian company to appear there has been the Australian Ballet years ago and it was their appearance there that put them on the world arts map. The same will undoubtedly happen to the ADT. Let us hope that before long the SDC will appear there too.



ADC's *Poppy* Act 1. Photo: Robert Morrison

BERLIN Komische Oper BALLET

Achievements in opera and dance at the Berlin Komische Oper have become legendary over the past thirty years. Steadily, limitless supplies of time and money have poured into the company since its foundation in 1947 in order to achieve a perfection of ensemble performance, of visual and technical effects, and perhaps above all a depth of artistic integrity and inspiration rarely seen on a stage elsewhere.

The awe in which the Berlin Komische Oper is



held has been compounded over the years by the consistent refusal of both the opera and dance companies resident there to perform outside their own home. It has become a place of pilgrimage for all those deeply involved in the performing arts. But now, in a major coup, ADC Australian Guarantee and David Frost, have joined with the Adelaide Festival whose initiative has persuaded the Berlin Komische Oper Ballet to undertake their first tour outside of Europe, a tour of Australia.



The Komsche Oper was set up in 1947 by Walter Felsenstein, one of the greatest stage directors of the 20th-century. His terms for taking on the job were tough and demanding. Yet the government of the German Democratic Republic, whose support of the arts currently stands at about four times the level of that in Australia on a per capita basis, gave him all the time and money he demanded, and more. In the late 1960s, the Government built a new home for the Komsche Oper exactly to Felsenstein's specifications. It is one of the most technically advanced theatres in the world.

So equipped, Felsenstein built up his dream of theatrical perfection. Months of rehearsal were used to perfect every smallest detail and implication of every dramatic situation on stage, whether an opera or dance. Sir Rudolf Bing, whilst general manager of New York's Metropolitan Opera, told of one of his visits to the Komsche Oper when he witnessed a staggering performance of Verdi's *Otello*. Yet Felsenstein became famous from the moment the curtain went up. It turned out that for the opening storm scene alone, Felsenstein had been rehearsing the chorus for weeks, out at a local aerotow factory before a wind tunnel blowing a force 12 gale. Now, fanned Felsenstein, here they were, staggering around the stage as if only a force 8 gale was blowing. He was not only a perfectionist, but an absolute ruler as well.

The Berlin Komsche Oper Ballet was established in 1968. It was set up under the artistic direction of choreographer, Tom Schilling. But like everything else at the theatre it came under the perfectionist dictum of Felsenstein that dance, like opera, must be good theatre, dramatically and visually convincing in every detail. Felsenstein himself finally died at the age of 74 in 1975 at his home in West Berlin, for like that of time and money, Felsenstein's artistic outlook refused to recognise political barriers too, not least the Berlin Wall. But the Komsche Oper, one of the most remarkable theatrical organisations in the world, remains a living

monument to one of the most remarkable men of theatre.

Tom Schilling, born in 1928, started life as a dancer, moving into choreography whilst at Worms in the 1950s, becoming artistic director and chief choreographer for the ballet company at the Dresden State Opera in 1965. Moving to the Berlin Komsche Oper Ballet in 1968 he has since created some thirty works for the company.

One programme to be offered on the forthcoming Australian tour includes samples of some of the best of Schilling's shorter works over these fruitful years. The only other choreographer represented in the programme will be John Cranko with *Jeux de Cartes*.

Cranko, the founder, inspiration and director of the Stuttgart Ballet until his untimely death in 1973, was one of the few outside choreographers to be invited to work in the rather hallowed halls of the Berlin Komsche Oper. Those who remember the sensational and revelatory visit to Australia of the Stuttgart Ballet in 1954 may grasp from this connection some sort of idea of the style, the theatrical integrity and the quality of performance which the Berlin Komsche Oper Ballet will be bringing to Australia in 1980.

Swan Lake, Schilling's latest full-length creation for his company, premiered in Berlin on March 12, 1978, is, however, liable to be the most sensational and revelatory offering of the forthcoming tour.

Not another *Swan Lake*? And despite the seven complete versions of the work seen in Australia, the answer is no, not another *Swan Lake*, but the first realisation of Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* ever presented here.

Tom Schilling, in association with the general manager of the Berlin Komsche Oper Ballet, turned to Tchaikovsky's original score, and explored his letters and diaries to discover his original dramatic intentions to present *Swan Lake* as it was meant to be seen, less than two years after its Berlin premiere. Australia will have the opportunity to see this boldest, boldest moving, and faultless version of *Swan Lake*.

Its "new look" is not just in the choreography and dramatic reshaping but also in the splendid designs of Eleonore Kleiber. There is not a classical tutu to be seen, instead the swans are clothed in beautiful floating chiffon costumes which contrast with the sumptuous magnificence of the court costumes.

So the Berlin Komsche Oper Ballet are bringing two great programmes to Australia. One, the complete *Swan Lake*, the other a programme of four complete one-act ballets featuring John Cranko's *Jeux de Cartes* together with three Tom Schilling ballets - *Fourth Symphony* (Mascari), *Evening Dances* (Schubert) and *La Mer* (Debussy).

This tour, involving an investment of \$2 million, is visiting four Australian cities - Melbourne, Adelaide, Canberra and Sydney. The entire company of sixty dancers has come to Australia, and are being accompanied by Australian orchestras of at least fifty-two musicians conducted by the company's musical director Lothar Siefarth.



CABOLLE

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NOT ANOTHER SWAN LAKE!

Background to the Berlin Komische Oper Ballet's production of *Swan Lake*

The seven different productions of the work so far seen in Australia have not had much to do with the *Swan Lake* which Tchaikovsky created over the years 1873-76. Rather do they derive from the version staged in St Petersburg in 1895 in memory of the composer who had died in 1893. Compared with Tchaikovsky's original concept, that version of 1895, confined by the lack of the court theatre to set the frivolous tastes of the day as hardly conceivable as the same work. The composer's own brother, Modest, was brought in to alter the story line, while a hack composer, Riccardo Drigo, junched the score accordingly.

What Tchaikovsky had done in 1873-76 was rebel against the concept of ballet as a mere court entertainment. In his music he revolutionised dance, lifting it onto a new level of dramatic intensity with a score which located its subject on a fully integrated symphonic basis. The music might seem approachable enough today, but at the premiere at Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre in 1877, the orchestra rebelled and even those who could play the music which Tchaikovsky had composed were reluctant to do so. Chorography, design and dancing were all at an equally incompetent level. The *Swan Lake* of 1877 was a disaster.

That disaster was no doubt in mind when the court theatre in St Petersburg set about reviving the work in 1895. Drigo in particular wrought havoc with the score. He made a start by hacking out no less than 822 bars, about a third of the music Tchaikovsky had composed. He then shuffled the remaining around, rearranged, recomposed, even added a few little numbers of his own. It was the fine choreography of Petipa and Ivanov which has carried *Swan Lake* through to modern times as the very epitome of classical ballet. But it is a *Swan Lake* which has little to do with Tchaikovsky's intentions.

Tom Schilling, in collaboration with the Berlin Komische Oper Ballet's general manager, Dr Bernd Kollinger, returned to Tchaikovsky's original score, first published in Moscow as recently as 1957. They explored his prolific writings in letters and diaries to discover the composer's original dramatic intentions. And they explored Tchaikovsky himself, one of the most

autobiographic of composers, to discover his state of mind at the time of composition. The rediscovery of *Swan Lake* turned out to be a long and difficult business.

It is in the past, it has been seen to revolve vaguely around the rather enigmatic figure of Swan Woman, Odette. Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* now emerges with the prince Siegfried firmly established at the centre of the drama. It is a drama, explains Schilling, not only about a man at odds with society, but one embroiled against his will in power politics. Siegfried is an outsider, a man who is not "as he is supposed to be" who is not "as they all are". On this level, says Schilling, Tchaikovsky's own personal experiences, his own alienation with society played a big part. But the central dramatic theme of the work, in Schilling now sees it is something else again. That theme involves "the manipulation and use of power - power to force humans either to submit or be destroyed. Both are possible and both are still happening in this world".

Swan Lake as conceived by Tchaikovsky is a tragic ballet. The frivolous diversions imposed upon it in 1895 have, in the new Schilling-Kollinger version, been removed. From the moment the curtain rises on the first act, audiences will be aware that they are about to see something new and different.

Restless and rebellious, Siegfried is seen from the start as a young idealist striving for a life of love, honesty and fulfilment in a decadent, soulless court.

His mother, normally seen as an aristocratic figure, vaguely gesturing from her throne, here takes on a far more active dancing role in the conflict with her son as she attempts to force Siegfried to accept his responsibilities, and conform.

She is aided and abetted by the so-called magician, Rothbart. In the traditional version of *Swan Lake*, Rothbart is another rather vague figure, flitting around the third and fourth acts of the ballet doing bawdy things to swan-maidens in general. But here he is restored to his proper role, a dual role of malignant power not only in the realms of nature where he dominates the swan-maidens, but at court too where he dominates Siegfried's mother, and is attempting to dominate Siegfried.

The first Act audiences were also introduced to Odile, the so-called "black swan" seen normally amongst the diversions of the third Act, one of Drigo's more blatant pieces of disregard for Tchaikovsky's intentions. But now she has been reinstated and is introduced from the start as a court dancer. Rothbart's chief tool in his concerted attack on Siegfried, Odile, as Kollinger points out, "represents art and artists who willingly work for a criminal political system".

It is whilst in this situation of conflict and confusion that Siegfried meets up with the swan-woman, Odette. She represents, in Siegfried's mind, not only an epitome of nature (the alternative to the world of stink, stagnation, conformity at court) but the representation of his longing for freedom. The challenge of breaking the power which Rothbart wields over Odette puts meaning and purpose back into Siegfried's life.



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Love is about to be put to the test in a hostile world. Although the lovers are tragically doomed to die, Sieghard's love and idealism holds firm under the onslaught which Rothbart unleashes upon him, forcing Rothbart to overplay his hand, in the process destroying himself.

The tragic relationship between the ideal and reality is yet another theme central to the new realisation of *Swan Lake*. Leslie Kellinger explains: "Swan Lake is symbolic of the strings of human beings at all times for a life of freedom from dignity, and for a real human existence. Progress and real humanism are only achieved through struggle and sacrifice. Rothbart is able to destroy his opponents physically, but he cannot destroy the ideas which have governed their lives. *Swan Lake* to us is not just a work of poetry and beauty, but a ballet in which the poetry is of great social significance."

Of considerable significance in the Schelling-Kellinger re-imagery of *Swan Lake* was the state of mind of Tchaikovsky at the time of composition. It is a work, suggests Kellinger, in which Tchaikovsky's own complex psychological reactions to his sexual experiences are sublimated into a fable. The music depicts two worlds which implausibly confront each other. Tchaikovsky, like Sieghard, was forced to live in two worlds, and was inextricably confronted by both of them.

In Tchaikovsky's case, at the time of composing *Swan Lake*, there was on the one hand the twilight world of homosexuality in which he was increasingly becoming embittered despite himself, to the point where he was suffering attack by group even at the Moscow Conservatoire when he was a celebrated teacher. On the other hand there was the happy normal family life of his brothers and above all his wife in which he delighted.

Indeed, *Swan Lake* started as a little dance work for his sister's children which he danced with them in 1871.

Another salutary anecdote, on Tchaikovsky's fascination with dance was to follow in 1873. On a commission from The Bolshoi he had already started work on the full-length *Swan Lake*, when he met for the first time in Moscow, the famous French composer Camille Saint-Saëns. "They took a fancy to each other" to quote a contemporary source. Amongst other things, they collaborated to compose a short ballet on the subject of Pygmalion and Galatea. It was performed that same year at the Moscow Conservatoire. Tchaikovsky danced the role of Pygmalion and Saint-Saëns that of Galatea.

But as work on *Swan Lake* progressed, it seemed to Tchaikovsky that the mood at the Conservatoire and throughout Moscow society in general was turning against him. In 1876 confronted with even more blatant gossip, he decided to marry.

Tchaikovsky's family, knowing his nature well, warned that marriage without love simply couldn't work for him. Yet the sort of love that Tchaikovsky so desperately needed was impossible to find as he well knew. "Time after time I have tried to express through my music the intolerable anguish and supreme bliss of love". And in the finale to *Swan Lake* we can hear unequivocally the music reflect his bitter belief that love was to be found only against the direct opposition, and might even then be cruelly denied realisation.

Yet he reaffirmed his intention to marry. His main concern seems to have been to protect his family and friends from the disgrace of his being publicly branded as homosexual. After the disastrous premiere of *Swan Lake* in March 1877, his resolve strengthened further. A powerful sense of fatalism descended upon him, a mood reflected in the fourth symphony which he immediately started composing. In July of that same year he married

He could not have made a more disastrous choice. Antonina Mikhaylova, one of his students at the Conservatoire, was not only stupid and unstable but a raging nymphomaniac too. The marriage was a disaster from the start. He did not love her, he told his friends again and again. He found her physically repulsive. He grew to hate her. He considered killing her. Instead, in October 1877 he attempted suicide, unsuccessfully. Tchaikovsky and his wife separated and never saw each other again, although she harpooned him with ever new venom until his death in 1893. The authorities thereafter attempted, as it were, to clean up the legend of their most celebrated composer. Antonina was locked away in a lunatic asylum. And as a final twist to that fate which Tchaikovsky believed had dogged him all his life, his great tragic vision which was *Swan Lake* was revived and handed over to posterity, cut, softened and edited almost beyond recognition.

Over the small single bed at Tchaikovsky's country retreat in Klin, some 100 miles out of Moscow, there still hangs his last ever painting. It is a painting of romantic clouds-swept moonlight over a lake. His dream of *Swan Lake* was central to his being. And now, at long last, that dream has been realised to be performed for Australian audiences by the Berlin Komische Oper Ballet.

Some facts about the Komische Oper Berlin (DDR) and its Dance Theatre

Foundation of Komische Oper 1947
Founder first director and chief producer Walter Eichens (d. 1973)

Director and chief producer since 1973 Joachim Hens

Foundation of Dance Theatre 1965
Director of the Dance Theatre and chief choreographer Tom Schilling
Premieres since 1947 128
Ballet premieres since 1966 22
Members of the staff 146 in 1973,
170 in 1979

Principal Dancers 29 female 18 male
and guest soloists

The Komische Oper is a fully subsidized State Theatre, with the character of an repertory theatre, giving about 220 performances annually of opera, operetta, musicals, ballet and concerts. About fifty performances are ballet.



BERND BAUINGEN studied ballet at the Leipzig School of Dance, and then at the University of Leipzig from 1963 to 1971, gaining his Ph.D. in Cultural Studies in 1972. He was appointed Director of the ballet of the Komische Oper in 1974.

He has published a book on dance, *Die Oper — Ten Auswüchse* (Berschel, Berlin 1975), and has written libretti for several ballets including *Rebecca Alca's House* (music by Hans-Christof Neuhäuser), *Black Bush* (music by George Kaiser), *The Divine Comedy* (after Virgil), with music by Beethoven, *The Creatures of Prometheus*, *The Human Comedy* (after Virgil's *Four Seasons*), these last two being given as a single evening of ballets under the title "Literature of Love".

Dr. Bauingen is a board member of the DDR Association of People in Theatre, and in 1975 was awarded the Prize for Artistic Creation for the People and in 1976 the City of Berlin Prize.

THOMAS SCHILLING has been chief choreographer and head of the ensemble of the Komische Oper Ballet since its foundation. Schilling was first a solo dancer with the ballet companies of Dresden, Leipzig and Berlin then director of ballet and chief choreographer in Weimar and Dresden.

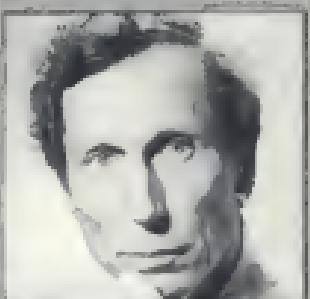
Among his widely varying choreographic achievements are the East German premieres of Astafayev's *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*, Prokofiev's *The Stone Flower*, Bernstein's *Fiddler on the Roof*, and Henze's *Undine*.

He has also choreographed the world premieres of *The Ashes of St. Agnes* by Otto Klemperer, *Impulses* by Uwe Kodermeier, *The Double* by Erich Gessler, *Rhythm and Dance* by Siegfried Matthus, and *Steel Bath* by Georg Kaiser.

Besides these adventurous and unusual ballets, Schilling has also created a variety of realistic and naturalistic ballets including Egli's *4 hours*, Symphonie Fanfarego to Berlin's music, Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*, *Crusoe* and *Coppélia* by Delibes (for the Berlin State Opera ballet).

He has choreographed his own *La Mer* for the Calleberg Ballet in Stockholm, as well as ballets for the Ballet de la Wallonie in Charleroi, the Grand Ballet Classique in Paris, the Vienna State Opera ballet, the Norwegian Ballet in Oslo, the Royal Opera ballet in Copenhagen, and the Poznan Dance Theatre in Poland.

Tom Schilling was awarded the Art Prize of the DDR in 1970, the National Prize in 1972. He is director of the department of choreography at the Hans Otto University for Theatre in Leipzig where he was appointed Professor in 1976.





HERMANN NEEF (dramaturg) has supervised all productions of the Company since 1971 in his capacity as dramatic advisor. Born in 1936 he is a graduate of the Humboldt University, Berlin in musicology and dramatics. He has extensive experience as a record producer and has published several books on the theatre.



ELEONORE KLEIBER (costume designer) has been in charge of costume design at the Komische Oper since 1968. She worked closely with Walter Felsenstein and has also designed for productions by Joachim Herz and Tom Schilling including *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Lulu*, *Boris Godunov* and *Der Robbe*, *Mahagonny* and *Anna Karenina*.

LOTHAR SEYFARTH (conductor) was born in 1931 and completed his studies in piano and conducting at the Leipzig Academy. Among the several important conducting posts he held are the Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra (1967-73) and the German National Theatre, Würzburg (1973-79). He is actively involved in the promotion of new music and is a frequent guest conductor in many European countries.

JIRÍ ČANCHO was born in Radeburg in South Africa in 1927. He studied ballet with Dalcroze Huskes in Cape Town, where at the age of sixteen he created his first work for the Cape Town Ballet Club. He went to London in 1946 to train as a dancer in the Sadler's Wells Ballet under Ninette de Valois and Peggy van Praagh. He soon gave up dancing to concentrate entirely on choreography, creating his first major ballet *Sea Change* in 1949 for the Sadler's Wells Ballet. In 1957 he created the first British full-length ballet *Prince of the Pagodas* to music by Benjamin Britten and with designs by John Piper. It was however only after 1961, when he became director of the Stuttgart Ballet, that his full talents were revealed. In the twelve years between then and his tragic early death in 1973 at the age of 46, he developed an entirely individual style, with especial qualities in narrative ballets, that became legendary in his own lifetime and has continued to influence choreographers and dancers all over the world.



JOACHIM RINK (set designer) was born in 1941 and studied under Professor Kilger at Berlin Weissensee Art College and subsequently under Karl von Appen. Since 1971 he has been resident designer at the Deutsches Theatre Berlin, and apart from his work on *Swan Lake* for the Komische Oper he is a guest lecturer at the Art College.

A PREVIEW OF SOME 1980* SHOWS!

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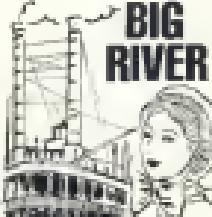
A Review of a Play — *Clive Barnes*
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Some of the dancers



HANNELORE BEY was a pupil at the Palace School, Dresden. She started her career at the State Theatre Dresden, at first in the corps de ballet, later as solo dancer. In 1966 she concluded additional studies at the Vaganova Ballet School in Leningrad in the master class of Natalja Dedenkova. In 1972 she became principal dancer of the Prague National Theatre. There she danced all important roles of the international ballet repertoire like *Swan Lake*, *Antar*, *La Sylphide*, *Cinderella*, *Spartacus*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Giselle*, *Chopiniana*. Guest performances led her to many European countries including Hungary, Italy, France, Greece. From 1973/74 she was a guest artist at the Komische Oper Berlin, dancing Juliet and in 1978 she danced Odette in Tom Schilling's new *Swan Lake* production. At the Berlin State Opera she danced solo roles in the Balanchine choreography *Symphony in C* (Bartók) and *The Four Temperaments* (Hindemith).

In 1989 she was given the title of "Prima Ballerina". The Government of the GDR honoured her artistic achievements by awarding her the Art Prize in 1970 and the National Prize in 1971. Hannelore Bey dances the main roles in ballets of the international standard repertoire as well as the choreography by Schilling, ad Abramov, *Cinderella*, *Undine*, *Symphonie Fantastique*, *Der Däpperränger* (The Dabbler), *Romeo and Juliet*, *Black Bird*, *Le Mer*, *March*, *Swan Lake*, *Festive Dances* and *Penitente*.

HANA VLACILLOVÁ received her training as a ballet dancer from 1966-72 at the Prague Conservatory. 1972-73 she continued her studies at the Vaganova Ballet School in Leningrad in the master class of Natalja Dedenkova. In 1972 she became principal dancer of the Prague National Theatre. There she danced all important roles of the international ballet repertoire like *Swan Lake*, *Antar*, *Sylphide*, *Cinderella*, *Spartacus*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Giselle*, *Chopiniana*. Guest performances led her to many European countries including Hungary, Italy, France, Greece. From 1973/74 she was a guest artist at the Komische Oper Berlin, dancing Juliet and in 1978 she danced Odette in Tom Schilling's new *Swan Lake* production. At the Berlin State Opera she danced solo roles in the Balanchine choreography *Symphony in C* (Bartók) and *The Four Temperaments* (Hindemith).



THÉRÈSE VENZHÖG trained in Utrecht and The Hague with Soja Gaskell and Ruth van Dantzig amongst others. 1966-73 she was first principal dancer with the National Ballet, Amsterdam and 1974-75 she held the same position in Düsseldorf. She has been connected with the Komische Oper as a guest principal dancer since 1978. She performs leading roles in works of the classical ballet repertoire as well as works by Rudolf van Dantzig and George Balanchine. She has participated in guest performances in Poland and Yugoslavia and many countries of Western and Southern Europe as well as South America.



LARISSA DOBROSHAN trained 1958 to 1967 at the Vaganova Ballet School in Leningrad. From 1967 to 1970 at the Kirov Theatre, Leningrad and from 1970 solo dancer at the Stanislavski-Kamenskij-Danilevskij-Music-Theatre in Moscow. Since 1976 solo dancer at the Körnische Oper, leading roles including *Rivier-Dame-Cortese*, *La Fille mal garde*, *Black Swan*, *Swan Lake*, *Youth-Symphony*, *Young Baron*, *Lehmaner-Pavane*, *Gavroch*, *Swan Lake*.

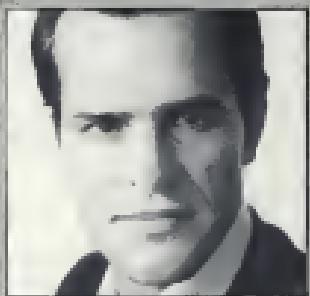


JÜRGEN HORMANN graduated from the Palucca School in Dresden in 1965 and began his career at the German State Opera in Berlin. In 1968 he became a solo dancer with the Komische Oper. In 1972-73 he worked at the Friedrichstadt-Palast. Since 1973 he again became a member of the Komische Oper Company. He danced leading and principal roles in *Fouz-Fran*, *La Dame Blanche* and *Juliet*, *Cinderella*, *La Fille mal garde*, *Black Swan*, *Swan Lake*, *Rever-Swan Lake*, *Youth-Symphony*, *Young Baron*, *Pavane*, *Gavroch*, *Lehmaner-Pavane*. In 1977 he became first solo dancer at the Komische Oper.



JUTTA DEUTSCHLAND trained at the State Ballet School, Berlin from 1968 to 1976 joining the Komische Oper in 1976 and performing solo roles since 1977. Leading roles in *Rever-Swan Lake*, *Young Baron*, *Lehmaner-Pavane*.

VLADIMIR FEDJANIN studied in Leningrad. In 1967 he joined the Ballet Ensemble of the Kirov Theatre. In 1970 he changed over to the Stanislavski-Kamenskij-Danilevskij-Music-Theatre in Moscow as solo dancer. In 1972 he gained first place at the International Ballet Competition in Varna and received the Gold Medal. As a leading solo dancer he danced the main roles of the classical repertoire and of many modern ballets. Since 1976 he has been first solo dancer at the Körnische Oper in Berlin and on tour he has interpreted leading roles with great success including *La Fille mal garde*, *Black Swan*, *Swan Lake*, *Rever-Swan Lake*, *Youth-Symphony*, *Young Baron*, *Lehmaner-Pavane*, *Gavroch*.





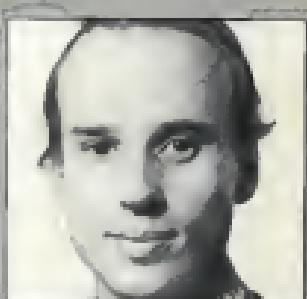
HARALD GAVLIK received his training at the Dresden State Theatre, where he began his career in 1962. In 1965 he continued his studies at the Waganova Ballet School in Leningrad, with A.I. Puchkin amongst others. In 1966 he became solo dancer in Dresden. At the same time, he signed a contract with Komische Oper as a guest artist. From 1967 he was with the Komische Oper, and in 1978 he joined the State Opera.

Together with Harald Bey he was awarded the Prize for the best pair at the International Ballet Competition in Vienna in 1968. In 1969 he was awarded the title of "Meisterstück". In 1970 he was honored by the Government of GDR by being awarded the Art Prize and in 1973 the National Prize. Roland Graefe's repertoire comprises the important parts of the traditional ballet but his reputation is enhanced by his interpretation of the leading roles in Tom Schilling's productions such as *Ahren's Symphonie Fantastique*, *Cinderella*, *Der Doppelgänger*, *Undine*, *Ruslan* and *Jules und Julie*, *Die Meer* and *Wuchs*. At the Berlin State Opera he has been dancing leading roles in *Spartacus* (Spartacus), *The Three Musketeers* (Scyllert), *Carmen* (Seme), *Alfonso*, *Creation of the World* (Kastakchina Wazikow). Guest performances as solo dancer as well as a member of the Komische Oper have taken him to many countries in Europe and the Near East.

MICHAIL GAVRIKOV attended Ballet School, Baku from 1949 to 1959. Followed by Master Class of the Waganova Ballet School in Leningrad from 1959 to 1960. 1956-1976 he was first solo dancer with the Opera and Ballet Theatre of Baku, where he danced the main leading roles in *Snow White*, *Swan Lake*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Cinderella* etc. 1966-68 solo dancer with the Komische Oper. Leading roles in *Ahren's Symphonie Fantastique* and *Cinderella*. In 1971 he graduated from the Science of Ballet course with the Leningrad Theater Institute 1972-76 coach with the Opera and Ballet Theatre, Baku. Since 1976 Chief Assistant at the Leipzig Theatre Academy (classical ballet and history of choreography). Since 1977 guest appearances at the Komische Oper (as coach and repertory-ballet-master).



THOMAS HARTMANN studied at the Palucca School, Dresden. Since 1970 he has been based at the State Opera, Dresden. Leading roles, amongst others, in *Giulio*, *Der Feenfisch*, *(The Temptation)*, *Der Grünzige Thürle* (The Green Table) and guest performances as solo dancer at the Komische Oper since 1979. Leading roles in *Snow White*, *Evening Bonfire*, *Lebenzauber*.



DIETER HULSE is a graduate of the Palucca School, Dresden. From 1970-74 he performed at the State Opera, Dresden. Since 1974 he has been solo dancer of the Komische Oper. Leading roles in *Romance and Juliet*, *Cinderella*, *La Mer*, *Die Dreie*, *Conrad*, *Roman Comedies*, *Snow Lake*, *Fourth Symphony*, *Patricia*, *Gavroche*.

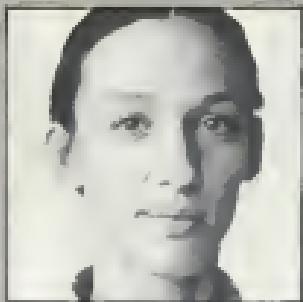
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OPERA



By David Gwynn

Summer Season

The year's summer opera season at the Sydney Opera House got under way with an extremely fine double bill from the national company, a coupling of works from the 18th and 20th centuries, Alessandro Scarlatti's *The Triumph of Honour* and William Walton's *The Bear*, which played in repertory for most of January with a guest revival of Ravel's *The Pearl Fishers* from the Victoria State Opera.

Not unsparsely, it was *The Pearl Fishers* which brought out a rash of *House Full* signs. Being as it was an exciting realization of a piece by the composer of *Cavalleria Rusticana* that had not been seen in Sydney for many years.

Artistically, though, there was nothing to complain about in the double bill. Indeed, it was one of the more commendable programming efforts the AO has come up with in many years, an interesting complementary blend of old and the new superbly performed all round.

THE BEAR - BIZARRE ROMANCE

Dramatically, of course, *The Bear* is merely an operatic reworking of a rather trite Chekhov story about a bizarre romance between a young and attractive widow and one of her husband's creditors, the bear of the title.

Whether one was familiar with Chekhov's bear or only Walton's, this production (staged by Tim Longwood and directed by Robin Lumsden) should have satisfied. Only the lighting, by Anthony Fetheringham, was wrong (at least on opening night) in the sense of being too bright at the outset to convey the mock-



Robert Edible (left) and Gregory Yermich (right) in the AO's *The Bear*. Photo: Bruce Cummins

mountain of Popova that dominates the opening pages of the opera. (This aspect of the production had improved immensely, along with several others, by the last performance of the season on January 26.)

Lumsden came up with some nice touches of direction in handling both his leading players, something Walton's score demands. The maximum effect in the drama, though, is only rarely driven even a little way beneath the surface of the story it presents. It is, indeed, the function of Walton's *Bear* that it not only fails to add anything to Chekhov's but even falls short by a rather wide margin of doing justice to its source. To succeed, a performance of this opera requires two central performers dramatically proficient enough to have succeeded in the original one-act play but who can sing as well.

The bear's share of the demands of *The Bear* - both as play and as opera - falls on the shoulders of the woman who plays the marvellously human part of Madam Popova, the young widow aggressively in deep mourning, if perhaps misguided as to the appropriate direction thereof. In fact, *The Bear*'s great strength as a work of creative art lies in the fact that both of its central protagonists are in distress at the outset, distress which is transformed, in less than an hour of contentious interplay,

into more quite violent antagonism and then to love.

It is immensely to the credit of Heather Begg the performer that she found it in herself to play Madam Popova so soon — a matter of only a few weeks — after she had lost her own husband in real life. And prove, in the event, the personal artistic triumph of the first month of this year's summer opera season, for the supplemented her triumph as Madam Popova with a marvellous recreation of her brilliant Lady Jane in *Paradise* which opened late in January for a brief run of one-subsequent performances.

Overall, *The Bear* was a thoroughly successful team effort even if the house share of the credit for its success must go to Begg. On opening night, Gregory Yermich lacked the drama, both dramatic and vocal, to prove a satisfying foil to Begg's Popova. By the end of the season, he had quite justified the trust displayed by the AO in preferring him to John Shaw, the world première Remnev, who was presumably available to sing the role in this production had he been required.

Robert Edible made as much as the production allowed him to make of the servant Luka. Perhaps one could conceive him to be a little less the buffoon and a little more the real-life personality than I enjoyed

ded in this relationship, but it was quite clear that what Falstaff did on stage he had been told to do, and no discredit to the dramatic impact of the piece was involved.

The *Bear* also marked the Sydney conducting debut of David Keam who acquitted himself very well indeed, making just about no manner of the often intricate, if seldom profound, score. Coupled with Krauth's excellent *Siegfried* in Brisbane last year, it surely stakes a strong claim for him to be given more opportunities to display his talents in Sydney and Melbourne in the near future.

TRIUMPH OF HONOUR

The other half of the year's opening double bill, Scarlatti's *The Triumph of Honour*, was less satisfying overall even if it had the benefit of seasons in Adelaide, Brisbane and Melbourne prior to its Opera House debut. There, it played on its own, but rightly with finally decided too flattery to satisfy an audience unaccustomed hence the Sydney coupling with *The Bear*.

There are no complaints to be registered about the production of *The Triumph of Honour* in itself. Peter Cooke's design is workable and eye-catching. Franco Cavarà's direction is innovative enough to eliminate at least some of the inherent excess of the most 18th-century operas staged for 20th-century audiences. It is also a considerable plus for a work the vast majority of whose action takes place in the second half, to skip the interval and play it straight through, as was done in Sydney for the first time.

The more pruning will be required if

bring the work along for audiences in the 1980s, despite a full complement of satisfying performances ranging in quality from very good to excellent-plus (none scaled the ramparts of the electrifying or the definitive) these were moments of tandem even in this *Triumph of Honour*.

Of the individual efforts, the most interesting, to me at least, was that of John Fullard as Ernesto, for Fullard is a newcomer to the national company and I had encountered him in the flesh previously only as a member of the supporting cast in Brian Howard's *Never Far* for the Victoria State Opera last year - not a part where he had much opportunity to display his vocal wares to very much effect.

In *The Triumph of Honour*, Fullard sang strongly and plausibly, and acted forcefully. Overall, it was a performance to make one look forward with real anticipation to the *Pagliaccio* he is scheduled to do in *The Magic Flute* later in the year.

Ronald MacNaughton was an excellent Bonifacio and Giacomo Dyer's Flamante the closest anyone in the cast, perhaps, came to the definitive despite some unconvincing shades, at the outset, of his come-through in *The Town of McGowen*.

As the conventionally virtuous young ladies of the piece, Judith Sutcliffe and Kathleen Moore were indistinguishably good. Cynthia Johnson provided some poignant comic asides as the worldly wizened Rosina, though she can't quite get away any longer with playing a teenage coquette as did Margaret Russell the first

persons I saw in the role, in Brisbane early in 1979.

The disappointments of this revival were Elizabeth Farnell's Anna Cornelia, who was inclined to sweep on her wares like a dive-bomber out of control (it is a good deal more likely than not to miss its target altogether), and Paul Ferrer's Riccardo which though very well sung indeed, never convinced that Riccardo was a new and a rôle invested of an essentially likable romantic tenor lead.

Predicably, Richard Dallal conducted with unseasonal commitment and unflagging energy and an immediate sense of style.

Even while addressing the enterprise of the AO in devoting this off-beat double bill and presenting it with such style, though, one finds it hard not to nod off when yet another of Scarlatti's predilection repeats itself in *sepoltura* head. Finally, *The Triumph of Honour*, whatever hewell does - must reluctantly be conceded to be something of an endurance trial to present-day audiences.

It was absolutely right to couple it for this season, with a much snappier contemporary work like *The Bear*. If only one or the other half of this annual double bill had had a bit more meat on its bones, the overall course might well have seemed in retrospect to be considerably more meritorious.

WELCOME RETURN OF PATIENCE

The other AO opening of the month was a welcome return visit of last year's John Cox production of *Patience*, wearing its (admittedly not great) age superbly and playing on a non-suburban basis to audiences who were quite clearly different already to the last person from those who saw it in its original manifestation.

Yet in one who had seen it before I坐ro stage, found myself lured by the proceedings. Instead, there were a host of reasons to be ingratiated that had been overlooked in the initial impact of the original which was so different from round-the-clock Gibbons and Sullivan as to sweep many a cobweb out of many a brain and overwhelm one with the realization that G and S can be infinitely more than a gaggle of cardsharp cutouts adopting an interminable sequence of pre-ordained postures, the name of the piece being as interchangeable as the names and attributes of the dramatic personae.

Suffice it to say that a cast that was identical to last year's I found particular pleasure in renewing the acquaintance of Heather Begg's Lady Jane, Robert Gaird's Grovener, Rhonda Burch's Falstaff and Dennis Ochan's Harcourt in that order. They, according to me anyhow, were all magnificent, but some of course, just a trifle more magnificent than others.



Heather Begg (Lady Jane) and Dennis Ochan (Harcourt) in the AO's *Patience*. Photo: Dennis Gruen



Gloria Foster and Janice Laverne in the 1977 *Pearl Fishers*.

PEARL FISHERS — PARTICULAR ACHIEVEMENT

In closing, though, I would like to say just a bit more about the VSO *Pearl Fishers* mentioned at the outset. It was an excellent production all round of a work that arguably has received less than its fair share of exposure over the years since it was written, and it was good to see it getting that sort of audience response it managed to attract at the Sydney Opera House. It was a particular achievement for

the VSO to be able to double cast it so strongly, even if with the identical aid of some talent on loan from the national company. It was even more commendable as an effort from conductor Richard D'Oyley, who moulded a scratch orchestra and a basically underpowered chorus and two lots of principals into coherent two casts of a work which at its best can be ravishingly beautiful in performance.

I preferred the alternative casting the one which got the nod on opening night, but I only saw the first cast when it was suffering

from the combined disadvantages of under-preparation and a few technical mishaps.

As I said, Yvonne Kenny was the epitome of the virginal priestess, but seemed to flag a bit on the depth of emotion from Gloria Foster, though occasionally troubled vocally where Kenny was not, was much more down to earth and convincing.

John Prentiss was a mild-mannered, low-key Zurga who never failed to please the ear but in the same time never managed to provide the sort of dramatic verve that Robert Remenyi sang with perceptibly less skill but exuded a marvellously rough-and-ready kind of stage presence that made him absolutely credible as the kind of chap likely to be elected chief of a rough-and-ready group of unsophisticated fishermen on a stormy vote.

Keith Lewis was vocally ideal for the title lead of Nadir whereas Jesus Laverne's voice is inherently a bit small, at least as yet, for the part. The astonishing thing about the ensemble with that high level of obviously been endowed with that most rare of operatic assets, a terror voice of considerable beauty coupled with the ability to use it to considerable effect.

Roel Mangen's Nourabad was an equally great asset in both casts, but the overall result of the quality assessment exercise implied by the above must be that the alternative cast came out better than the premiere cast.

No matter how you look at it, the VSO *Pearl Fishers* added up to a thoroughly pleasing stage realization of a work too seldom performed. But at the same time, a word of caution: it would be premature to hail the VSO as the strength of that success alone, as a second AD or anything like it. Meaning a single production for a series of performances and then going on to reprise one's own effort during a period free of performance obligations, the usual media approach of the VSO and an ad in quite a different thing from fulfilling the function of a full-time repertory company which at any one moment in its working life must be performing two or three productions in repertory even as it rehearses for others due to open in the near future.

This is not in any way to belittle the VSO effort in reviving *The Pearl Fishers* as well as the Sydney Opera House in January, merely to emphasize that one or two productions, no matter how marvellous, do not of themselves a full-blown opera company make — any more than the advent of a single notable according to the old adage, proclaims the arrival of a full-blown summer!

DAVID GIGER is editor of *Opera Australia*.

THEATRE/ACT

Excellent business

JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR OLIVER!

By John Paisley

Jesus Christ Superstar by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice. *Castro Theatre* (West) and CTC (Cheltenham) at the *Camden Theatre*. ACT. Opened 10 January 1980.

Director Terry Gilligan. *Musical director* Keith Brighouse. *Design* Anthony Ward. *Choreography* Kim Hardwick.

Cast Andrew Lloyd Webber, Mark Jackson, Mary Magdalene, Barbara Lloyd, David Amerson, McDonald, John Craig, Michael Capes, Gary Prichard, Peter Collymore, Dennis Dancer, David Bremner, Graham Burrell, John Caudle, Al Davies, Ian McDonald, Peter McEnnally, Phil O'Meara.

(Photo: Alan)

Oliver! by Lionel Bart. *Tempo Theatre* at Theatre Royal, Cheltenham. ACT.

Director Jason MacCabe. *Musical director* Keith Brighouse. *Choreography* Karen Findlay. *Design* Russell Brown.

Cast Glynis Bowes, Lucy Dwyer, Andrew Davies, Mark Whibley, Peter, Charles, Helen, Kate, Paul, Alan.

After decades of dull seasons, Cheltenham came alive last year with the *Camden Theatre* Trust's promotion of *MFS Piaf*. The success of that production not only encouraged the CTT to take a risk again, with a production of *Jesus Christ Superstar*, but also brought the local amateur operator in, *Tempo*, out of their comfort zone with a production of *Oliver!*. Both productions are doing excellent business and for different reasons deserve to do so.

Superstar opened with promising vitality, the chorus singing with exciting clarity and energy and the lighting, amplified music and special effects all combining to generate the special tension which almost alone justifies these big budget productions. But the early promise wasn't quite fulfilled.

Two major hindrances were the inflexible set and the economically dictated decision to use corded microphones. There seemed at times to be half a hundred of these snaking, making their snaking track around, between, above and below the performers, making movement fraught with risk. Just as an army of corrupts that some unfortunate sooths would be suddenly crucified, the microphones snared from the hands by a tangled chorus (led by Mark Jackson (Jesus)) frequently employed a shrill falsetto which occasionally sounded involuntary.

Movement was of course restricted by the necessity to keep mike cords clear. And the set too, gave little help to the choreographer, Kim Hardwick. Two ramps on left and right running up and away from the audience joined across the back by a twelve foot walkway, formed a squatly comfortable area, a stage cruise, which contained most of the action. I came in from the interval hoping the set would be changed allowing different choreographic patterns. I was disappointed.

Yet quite frequently the high quality of individual performers lifted the show, despite the limitations of movement, set and costume. Virginia Lowe (Mary Magdalene) singing "I Don't Know How To Love Him" got the hairs on the back of the neck stirring, and Craig MacLean (Judas), Philip Smith (Simon) and Stephen Pike (Peter) contributed fully. Colin Shatto (Pontius Pilate) has a clarity of voice and characterisation which would have earned a good round of the curtain call if there had been one. There wasn't, which is my final complaint. Maybe Terry Gilligan as director felt the mood of the final scene was too propulsive to suffice with such a frappery as a call. Whatever the thinking behind this decision, I think it was daft, instead of rousing the audience to a high (and overall the show had enough drive and energy to lead us towards) the final moments left the audience with the sensation of being denied its rights. A pity.

Tempo's production of *Oliver!* gives more (for less) than I'm used to expecting

from local amateur companies. I was delighted by the efforts of this large cast and found more to praise than quibble over. Joyce MacLellan's direction is intelligent and generous, allowing her cast plenty of opportunity to show their talents and encouraging them to play to their strengths. Thus Charles Oliver's high-camp Fagin was a surprising pleasure, making a new kind of sense of Fagin's ambivalence, half-exploiter, half-protector. Russell Brown, also responsible for the effective and flexible sets, was a fine Mr Bumble but might have done better set so force his voice into the uncomfortable lower register. The vocal I liked best was that of Kate Peters (Nancy). I regretted that she wasn't given a chance to sing unaccompanied (perhaps during a repeat).

But it's the children who carry the show and though there was a little lack in the choir work on opening night (and there still is), they were obviously well-rehearsed and directed. David McCubbin (Oliver) charmed his way out of a moment of uncertainty with remarkable presence of mind and otherwise displayed a very engaging talent. A little more detail and precision of characterisation wouldn't go amiss however. As Oliver, Stuart Davy achieved a nice balance between pathos and playfulness that suggested both the victim and the survivor.

The orchestra, unseen, and unable and to set the full stage did justly justice to a score which plumbs from Gainsborough to haunting sweet calls. A few effets from *Tempo*, long may they prosper.



Mark Jackson (Jesus) and the Jesus Christ Superstar Chorus. *Photo: Steve Sargent (photocall)*



State Rep./Lucy Wagoen, Exec. Editor

Questions of universal importance

BULIE'S HOUSE

By Barry O'Connor

Bulie's House by Thomas Keneally. National Theatre

Lyric Theatre, Sydney NSW. Opened February 4, 1988

Director: Ken Stanley. Designer: Michael Francis.

Lighting Designer: Keith Chapman. Stage Manager:

Michael Murphy. Music: Philip Lander. Projector:

Steve Hartung. Stage Manager: Athol Compton. Casting: Rob

Mass. Set and Art: Bill Conn. Costumes: Maria Smith.

Debuts: Barbara Bremner, Francis Chitty, Don Best,

Hugh Evans, Warren Harris, Michael Philip Lester

(Projections)

Bulie's House marks novelist Tom Keneally's return to the theatre after an eight-year absence and the modest success of *An Angel at My Table* in 1972. The present play reintroduces the concerns of *The Charn of Justice* (playwright) but instead of Victorian Australia and a rather tattered sense of morality, *Bulie's House* is set in the 1950s on a mission station in Arnhem Land where the tragedy of good intentions takes place. It's a small community, only three whites and four blacks, but it's a microcosm of the relations, and more to the point, irreconcilable cultural sympathies of black and white Australia.

Bulie's House is rated by a freak wind as mysteriously leaves the other houses in mission intact. The moral dilemma 'Can Bulie rebuild against the advice of the and defy the Waangs or stand? Or does he go ahead, as the whites were confident that he is merely of eccentric notability?' (A little European explanation is that



Bob Mass, Martin Morris and Joanne Sutherland at *Anselmo's Bulie's House*. Photo: Robert McFarlane

Bulie incurred the wrath of God in his of Old Testament bloody mindedness)

The house is not absurd, but a monument of tribal ingratitude is erected in the middle of the mission compound in government cement. These Ranga are the real secret tribal truths, the embodiment of black wisdom derived from a time when mankind was at one with the planet. The Ranga are forbidden to white men and black women. And they have never before been seen publicly except for a fleeting five seconds, when the Ranga shared screen time with Mickey Mouse in a movie made by an American university team who booted up a co-operative black into revealing his secret to them.

The time the blacks have revealed the Ranga is the hope that the whites will regress. The point of Keneally's play is that the white have no reply, we have no Ranga, no mystery. Modern Society has no magic, it has no integrity. Ironically the expectations of the blacks are immature not spiritual, impractical in wanting the British Museum but surely not in wanting a new generator. Even those things which can be provided are obstructed by forms of linguistic and fiscal obfuscation. The anthropologist brings

books in a desperate but well meaning attempt to make reciprocity. But the books are second hand and don't tell you how to marry a healthy wife (Bulie had had trouble with a tubercular man) What help can come from a world which progresses has atomised, where communications are impossible, and there are no realities behind the labels any more.

The play is loosely based on historical events that took place in the fifteen on an island off north east Queensland. Most of the important events have already taken place before the play begins, and the action is continually referring back to passed events. The leveling of Bulie's house, the coming of the American anthropologists, the drawing of the missionary's wife in Bulie's company. The issue is a series of non-events on stage — events that don't barely seem to happen — which focuses attention on the ideas Keneally presents after the manner of a Shawian drama of ideas. These ideas, however, are given breadth and humanity in the actors' handling of their characters.

Athol Compton's Bulie has been handed the centre of the play by its author, but Compton will wear a keen edge to

stay there. Bob Mira's tribal elder and Justice Samuels' Doolee are fine. Kevin Smith's Walke is very good as nature's down-and-sympathetic fool. He is the only man of passion in the play, he is Ich longing in the horrors of Panney Bay for fratreside. Don Beld's Professor Cheary represents the usual academic anguish of knowing that something should be done. The government man played by Bill Conn, embodies the average Australian attitude. He wants to be mates with the black bards but only on his own party suburban terms. A very good performance. The most interesting character, the Rev Hugh Burton, is not developed enough. It's a pity because Mandy Harris shows that he has the resources to take the character where the dramatic stand-off could not go.

Baker's *Moved* does not answer many questions it raises. On the contrary, it shows that there are no answers, no easy ones anyway. Director Ken Hawe's master of fact that is to say objective, handling of the play ensures that his staging the whole piece a sense of improvised unreality. Designer Michael Pearce and lighting man Keith Edwards provide an unclashed and tasteless stagescape against which literary questions of universal (not so much) importance can be posed.

The play starts with a voluntary dyande, soon followed by a church choir. At the end of the play the significance of this musical introduction is clear. After two hundred years the aboriginal scream of despair has become the musical core of the dyande. Now the choir's song of European salvation has been raised in response, and raised appropriately to distortion pitch at the Nurtred Upstart.

Awesome vacuity

ELIZABETH I
BROADWAY

By Robert Page

The Acting Company (of New York) presented by the Huntington Theatre Trust and The Huntington Foundation Arts, One Magnolia Theatre, Sydney 4550

Elizabeth I by Paul Foster. Opened 3 February. (Mid-December 1980 - 1 March 1981)

Directed by George Abbott and Philip Diamond. Design: Gerald Cates. Costumes: John Lee Beatty. Opened 3 February 1980.

Cast: Lisa Eichhorn, J. Michael Bailey, Suzanne Costello, Jeanne Herring, John Lawrence, Martin Blank, Bruce Marks, Matthew Ransburgh, Robert Farnon, Tom Robbins, Charles Shanahan, Scott Walker, Linda Williams, William Meltzer, Randy Hall, Richard Green.

(Prologue)

God bless America. Huge in size, major consumer of the world's consumables, a superpower by virtue of its destruction



Mandy Harris and Charles Shanahan. *Elizabeth I*. (c) Alan Broadbent

capability, the only country able to afford to give some of its people a holiday on the moon, creator of the jumbo jet, it is ungracious by virtue of status.

Presently the Acting Company — with a map of the place in its logo — is here to impress us. Again the statistics are mind-boggling: 37 plays in 165 cities in 31 American states before 725,000 people, travelling over 25,000 miles, and this year Australia! Critics and nominations for Critics' Circle, Drama Desk and Obie Awards (that how many did they actually get?). It has been called "the finest repertory company in New York City" by the New York Times, which prompts the question, how many others are there?

The programme must this month judge on two out of three, for *The Man from*, as I understand it, disappeared last fall out for Sydney. The Big Sissons is thought unable to cope with such an outsize phenomenon as *pink*. (One weren't the multi-bladed razors washed out and the razor blades surgically removed several years ago?) What we'd get was Elizabeth I, American author Paul Foster's romp, proving that *unashamed* look is a species, and *unashamed*, a no which would be a McKinley Sig! except that it's too old even for the

longest *Man of La Mancha*? That lot of wit, humanity and farce and of Cervantes, or the plays

over all of *Requiem and Gondoliers* are dead and of course excepted of any comment on the human condition, add in with large measure, the approach and style of *Gondoliers* even down to the rainbow coloured braces — and you have some vision of the awesome vacuity of the production of *Elizabeth!* I would add that by expert Sydney's New. That he apparently made a good job of the poor several years ago, but should forbear on the grounds that to do so firmly may appear strongly parochial, secondly that it cannot be given first hand and finally that it is hardly conceivable.

It is one of those plays which touches on the Great Figure of History. But it is relatively modern, alienated and Brechtian in that it keeps breaking out of its true decorativeness purport to bring together a group of players presenting a play about. So, we have to face, across play-expansive materials of the long road to presenting their play about Elizabeth to Elizabeth — in which case why, as permed players do they wear number braces and piano? It's all too confusing.

Surprisingly the press answer under the name of Lynn Cohen, who not only directed but was an award here for *The Jester's Delight*, in this which the artless publicity machine managed to overlook entirely. Talking of artless it's subtlety to

realise that even directors with such a high position on the Great Chain of Being as he has, turn out to be human after all.

High expectations are of course hardly disappointed. Consider Wordsworth nursing for years on the imagination a vision of the towering majority of Men Blasé, but finding in actually what amounted to only a lump of rock. If that explains my reaction to *Elizabeth!*, the reverse effect should have occurred for right two.

Nevertheless, despite trepidation, I did think that there is one thing Americans did do it must be a play about Broadway — after all that Walt Disney World had other home ground. The time even exposing a lump of rock was going too far what we got was in public.

For whenever the name Broadway may conjure in the mind, this hasn't gone. The setting is supposedly though it is very oddly shaped — the backstage area of the Paradise Night Club, some kind of speakeasy in New York. The rat-tails of a gangster killing a rival from expansion motives too significant for American spectators in case you're looking for bigger themes and a finally shot by the man's wife who has been undercover agent of the chorus girls all the time. Oh equal non-importance is the story of the performer going the girl who is

temporarily bedazzled by the dimmed stage bright light. Trifles? I think so — you guessed the bods.

The only interest in the show comes when the girls, at regular intervals, line up to make their entrance on the stage of the night club behind the one relentlessly based on our situation. By last interval one wouldn't help being jealous of the night club patrons who seemed to be getting much the best side of the show. The point was proved when finally we were treated to the big finish.

Perhaps it was unfair of the promoters to put what is really amateurish set — a group of drama students in a major commercial venue, but then the company's air of having a right to be there as their entrepreneurs from Islamic Monroe off individual performances seems valid when all in a new blood's well equally clamoured for attention and were, mostly, amazingly interchangeable in their mannered gestures and poses.

There was plenty of material here for Welcome Back Kotter but unless the style uncharmed general, apparently little else. Most striking was the constant display of youthful charm which never descended into a failure of approach. If this is the crucial in which the future of American stage rests, there needs to be a lot more subtlety for optimism.



Peter Bensley, Michael Bushell and June Robson (L-R) in the Among Us, Elizabeth!

One woman musical

SONGS MY MOTHER DIDN'T TEACH ME

By Derek Peart

Songs My Mother Didn't Teach Me by Peter Egan and John Muller. Bangs Production Sydney NSW. Opened 2 January 1980. Director: Peter Egan and Designer: Peter Egan. Choreography: Karen Johnson. Stage Co-ordinator: Lar Haines. Music director: Gregor Burns. Assistant: Gregor Burns. Musician: John Muller. (Photos: Murray)

Nancy, a good catholic country girl comes to Sydney and falls in with a drag queen dancer teacher. A successful dancer, she falls in love and then falls pregnant but Jack, the father, shoots through. Years pass. Unable to support her son, she leaves. Jack is now a millionaire recluse. He rejects her again and dies having the son nothing. The child is taken into care, the mother remains lonely and born by love. But, she tells the blind piano man who knows her story all is in the best because her son is now a sailor.

Prissy, annoying stuff, but then that is the plot of the musical *Songs My Mother Didn't Teach Me* and of such stuff are musicals made. After all, who would have believed the plot of *Evita*, and if there are clichés, wasn't *Passion From Heaven* full of them?

Derek Peart's outstanding series of plays attempted to explore how clichés, especially those of popular songs, could articulate the inner longings and passions of characters, not to say repressed characters, and it could laugh at itself. *Songs My Mother Didn't Teach Me*, however, does little with its clichés other than contain them, and if the comment about the sailor is meant as an ironic joke it wasn't played that way.

The show, billed as "a new original musical" has book by Peter Egan and songs and lyrics by John Muller. In Muller's case, I found myself thinking that youngish young man in the audience who used to be an adolescent and be disconcerted. Scowling, Muller remains a scatter by day, perhaps he needs some more vodka. He is certainly a man of mystery. When the lights came up on stage he was already seated at the piano, resiting in black, back to the audience. I waited for him to turn. It was to wait the entire evening. The white suit and the heavy framed dark glasses indicated he couldn't see us and obviously we weren't to get the chance to see him.

Not only was the piano man blind but deaf too. His only response to questions



Lar Haines and John Muller in *Songs My Mother Didn't Teach Me*

were to smile at the boys. Since Karen Johnson did nothing but dance, that left Lar Haines, the remaining member of the cast, to do all the talking and singing. And this was the point of "original", a musical with one speaking part. If looking at a piano's back for an evening is disconcerting for an audience it must be even worse for the actress who has to try to act with her.

With no change of intermission stage, Lar Haines repeated scenes in the first half whether to direct her songs to the audience, frankly acknowledging their presence, or remain within the constraints of the stage situation. She chose the latter, but it was only in the second half when she seemed to talk to the piano and sing for him that she seemed at ease. One guesses the audience are supposed to feel her isolation. She sang songs about loneliness and Jack the millionaire (after living alone), but most of the time she seemed caught in a void between stage and audience.

The western, accent of the piano they'd created, had provided her with an "other ego" (Karen Johnson who appeared in various costumes from Nancy's past and danced sometimes with her and sometimes alone). Nancy's taped voice was used to speak from the past and articulate inner thoughts, but most of the time Lar Haines had to do the work, dramatising stories in which she played all the parts, moving, singing and dancing her heart out. She's a talented singer and dancer, but bereft of a supporting cast, her talent wasn't enough. She needed lines and songs much better than those she was given to work with.

Not that the songs were bad. The standard was generally high and John

Muller's playing was excellent. His songs tend to have frequent tempo changes with complicated internal lyrics, like this one from an amusing piece about a male in her past: "How do you like when you don't want to be with the guy who wants to be with you?" The trouble is that while there were some excellent passages, the music was rarely catchy, nor even memorable. The book throws up the occasional comic gem, like this one from a boy friend: "Can't come out tonight, got to chase my stamp" or "He wants to see a pregnant belly dancer and anyway I didn't want the lad to be peddy for the rest of my life"; but the dialogue hardly sparkled.

Maybe in a different context everything would have worked. The setting was a deserted club in the small hours and I suspect that a cabaret situation with the audience on tables around the stage might have provided the "intimate" atmosphere a sign outside the theatre claimed. If Lar Haines had been able to play off an audience, and acknowledge that this was a one-woman show, I think she'd have been much happier. And it's partly a matter of expectations. If a show is styled a "musical", one expects more than a string of songs held together with amusing stories.

In case I've been less than fair, I should add that the lady behind me obviously loved the show. From beginning to end she kept up a monologue in conversation with Lar Haines about "She's Learned That's who, you know" "Beautiful figure hasn't she?" "I don't know how the neighbours'll feel", and her parting shot: "I could have invited to him play all night Beautiful just beautiful."

THEATRE / QLD



By Don Batchelor/State Rep

Bingo but not jackpot

BINGO

By Claire Cowther

Bingo by Edward Bond. La Boite Theatre, Brisbane. Qld Opened 1 February 1990. Director: Andrew Doherty. Design: David Bell. Lighting: Rodney Therkelsen. Sound: Kenneth Brooks. Cast: Christopher Ian Austin (Old Man), Bill Badenoch, Judith Balmer (Mother), Young Woman, Amanda Woods (Old Woman), Andrew Badenoch, William Condie, Stephen Elliot, Tim Ross, Shirley Johnson, Brian Phelan, Adam Bates, Peter Kelly, Lloyd King, Ben Johnson, David O'Neill. Photo: Alan Ross.

"I think my plays are poetry. Poetry is what you have left when you take the prose away," says Edward Bond of himself.

Despite pain and thwarted humanity is what we have when we take away the verbal violence of his poetry. Take away the unique acting space of La Boite, so simply utilised by David Bell in a paraply of English garden hedge with the odd accoutrement of peeps, and you have left eleven actors exposed relentlessly under Rodney Therkelsen's lighting, racing through a course of unyielding moral deliberation and (mostly) reprieved physical delirium.

The playwright's intentions, his complexity of might the relationship between society and its subjects perceived by the social order, the concept of money and corruption all seem lucid and heavily-handled in this production.

Shakespeare, who writes like a paragon of humanism, the radical social analysis perceiving man's inherent contradictions as presented to

us in pathosically in Mr. Milson's production, more so than in Mr. Bond's play, that one only feels empathy for his blighted family, represented here by the daughter (played by Rachel Skinner). As Shakespeare, Ian Austin provides vocal truth but the portrayal lacks a compassionate presentation.

I wanted no sympathy with Wilf and could not with production. No man is all demon, as was Bond's and Shakespeare's returning, pensive artist. The man wouldn't melt in the hand of the Bard who had penitence in his writer career to lose himself, and yet no sympathy was extracted by the production, despite the searching for purity and truth evident in the soliloquy. Self-realisation is more potent than any potion supposedly given by Ben Jonson. Therefore, let us melt in Ian Austin's hands. Mr. Milson, even though the snow won't fit Wilf's hand.

The contrasts within the production are all too stark, an simplistic as was the stylised hedge, yet the Old Man managed to reveal the crinkles as well as the green

sheen with his hedge clippers.

Dragon, tortoise and the holt of life as the antecedent epiphany and now are hedgeclipped home and then the fight itself begins with Ad. II as Ben Jonson meets David O'Neill sought the meaning of his "Food" to Shakespeare's "Lear". One only wished he had arrived earlier and stayed longer because within his despair were the seeds of an amorous same relationship with Wilf, while the two actors tried for but did not quite achieve.

Shakespeare's conception (the essence of his mortality) is more enduring than the didactic social morality of Bond. Bond so smacks of evangelism and the conundrums he would seem to deny in Shakespeare, upholding and upholding him for his parapox. Playwright and director seem confused in this production as La Boite.

Mr. Bond has written that there are many ways for an audience to be got at while watching a play, for instance being shot in the back of the neck, but on that premise this production doesn't give me a twinge.



David O'Neill (Johnson) and Ian Austin (Shakespeare) in La Boite's *Bingo*. Photo: Caroline Burgess

THEATRE/SA



Susan Villa/State Rep

Technical certainty and uncertainty

FIND THE LADY ERROL FLYNN

Find The Lady by Michael Perrow. Playhouse, Adelaide SA. Directed James Hill. Designer Ted Craig. Drums: Shelly Corcoran. Lighting: Jim Brander. Cast: Ted Craig, Kathleen Fisher, Rose Lake, Mollie Sugden, Michaela McPhee, Tom Cawelti, Barbara Peate, Max Dawson, Playhouse Building, Main Auditorium, Robbie McRae, Director: David Frost, Andrew Leslie. Design: Ali Moore. Rehearsal: John French. Blame: Chamberlain (Professional).

Fool's Errand by Jerome Kroll. Art Bar to Bob George Street Company, Adelaide SA. The Space Complex, 17 Jackson, 1988. Director: Tom George. Stage Management: Bob George. Music: David Scott. Stage Management: Lorraine Moore. Wardrobe: Lynette. Choreography: Michaela McRae. Cast: Pauline, Andrew Clarke, Lucy Taylor, Steve Isaacs, with: Maxine Satchell, John Leslie, Tim Barker, Ali Moore. Bob George Street Company (Professional).

Michael Perrow's *Find The Lady* is firmly embedded in the English tradition of coarse whodunnit summer season farce. Akin to the tradition, in the standard TV half-hour comedy, with its inexpressible characters, stock situations, rapid dialogue and beliedc-esque laugh-track. It comes as no surprise, then, to find Mollie Sugden, known for her role as Mrs Slocombe in the series *Are You Being Served?*, as Mollie lady, and chief show-card in this holiday production at the Festival Centre.

Such a play sets out to entertain and entertain it did under Ted Craig's



Michaela McPhee and Michaela McPhee as *Find The Lady*. Photo: Jim Holmes

direction. If the shrill laughs and roistering laughter around me were anything to go by. This was despite some lapses in the writing, when the unexplained and erraticism of more than one character, and provided at times some rather weak links in the plot for the sake of a lousy accent. One characterly hilarious situation, for

instance, concerning a bed in a trunk, was caused by the lack of a convincing reason for the body's being put there in the first place. And — a note of disquietment: it's always disquieting if the "who" of a whodunnit is clear before the end.

Nevertheless, Mollie Sugden gave the audience what they had come for — Mrs

Brooksby is the fifth, and with a greater vitality and physical agility than one expects from the small screen. She has sure knock of delivering the lines with all the pan they were expressly written for her bread, and often course. Northern accent, though she could not hide the incongruity of a script which made repeated reference to her role as a friend across. In a play which depends on stereotypes, she did not sound like your stock not-ley of the boards. It was a part which seemed to me to peripheral to the play as to be best omitted.

For the rest, As long as there was a strong vocal attack to urged the plot forward, then laughter occurred and suspicion of disbelief ended at will. However, the moment voices lost vigour, the pace and our interest lit up, and it took the courageous countenance of Ms Sugden or Mrs. Noble's study in amateurish impotence to restore confidence. It is the mark of the technical certainty of these two ladies that they were able to do so.

Technical continuity I found disappointingly scarce in Stage Company's holiday contribution to The Space. Perhaps it was a case of overconfidence, having done the rounds of SA and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Rob George's *Arvel Fletch's Great Big Adventure Book* for both was closer to matching up its 1988 performance. On the evidence presented in this return season, I found it difficult to understand how it had come this far.

It is pure joy, blessed with a gift of a title to catch ever so little at the heartstrings of anyone who childhood as a child in the words "adventure book". Coupled this with the romantic rake himself and poor audience is spoiling for the delicious self-indulgence of a trip down nostalgia lane. What can go wrong?

These two words again. Technical certainty. Sure enough of character was not the aim, the playing had to be bouncy, fast and slick enough to obviate the need for a. Around the constant figures of Arvel and his intrepid but still would-be biographer, Lou Tudor, there revolve thirty or so characters played by five actors. Ben Barker is a past master of the living cartoon, and Rob George himself proved a dab hand at rapid personality change. But the occasional lapses in audience engagement were then easily blamed and with them the story. Andrew Clarke looked and behaved like a believable Flynn, but suffered along with Nina Linda (Lou Tudor) from over-expansion as a two-dimensional character so that his final moment of truth - going after regrets - slipped irreducibly into sentimentality.

After the emotions of *Flat Broomberry*, I found the dragons at times surprisingly vague. Some translations were clumsy, with the final punch-line often buried in an

awkward cut, and lighting could have done more to give focus to the back stage area. Choreography was ordinary, while the downbeat quality of most of David Schiff's music did not provide enough of a contrast with the stage action.

As worn it was dull and run of the mill, at best, light-hearted fun. But isn't it true that Rob George and Stage Company managed on from the never-formal mannered their and began to push beyond superficiality to

something more lasting? Both have touched on themes which could take a load of explosions in depth, both have made decisions deliberately to tether on the surface. It has become something of a fashion lately to take a famous person and build a play around that. But a good play will stand whatever the name of the protagonist. In this case, call Fred Fletch John Smith and I wonder how successful his Adventure Book would be.



Andrew Clarke as Arvel Fletch. Photo: Jon Dakin

THEATRE/VIC



State Rep./Suzanne Spunner

Depth and potential

RECKITT SEASON

By Colin Duckworth

Waiting for Godot at the State Rep. Last Rite By Samuel Beckett La Mama Theatre, Melbourne. Tel: 03 662 0111. Director: Jean-Pierre Mignot. Music and sound design: Andrew Bell. Set and costume: Bruce Keller. Marilyn O'Donnell. (Professionally)

To begin this evening with Beckett with a piece written for radio was asking for trouble as whatever Beckett does is perfectly conceived for the medium he chooses for it. However, *Waiting* (acted, by Keller, Beckett's most difficult world was in fact enhanced by the powerful physical presence of Bruce Keller.

Admittedly some of the effects were maiming or distorted. Henry clamping down the stairs and across the curtain in equally hosts did not give the impression of struggle on the beach. Having Ado's voice coming from the mouth of Marilyn O'Donnell just behind one's head, loud and clear, did not render the "less resonant voice" of the Ado within Henry's head. But even though the constant tension between illusion and reality implicit in the text and in better radio versions than the BBC's in 1959 once could not be maintained on stage, Keller's grim, grotesque, sardonic and clear-spoken performance held it completely, and led us to look forward with confidence to his Krapp (Andrew Bell's sound design, so vital to the creation of atmosphere, was discreet and precise. The modified electricity-eveque sargeiros family

resembling, and yet "so unlike the sound of the sea"; the unloved, unwanted child's chattering, pulling on the broken down piano; all parts of the banality to which the mind of the old man, caged in solitude, is prone.

The stage was then littered with rubbish for a truncated version of what might have been better called *Shoe of Death*, green, brown, grey. Where was the newborn baby's eye? Without it, the thirty-second encapsulation of the life-cycle makes no sense. The sweeping-up after was more rewarding to watch.

Marjorie will. Oberon finally tracked down the source of the noise emanating, suspended apparently a couple of feet from the ceiling was the infantile spirit of Muchi. But from that point on, the performance

by any spectator who did not know the text.

With Bruce Keller's Krapp we were back on solid ground. Keller had made the sacrifice of his hair — necessarily at such short stage — thus giving his 69-year-old decrepit, contrasting well with that of the 36-year-old Krapp on tape. He reproduced some rare initial gasps (surprised bangs of head on lamp, symbolic gesture of sonic regeneration with lowered head, mouth full of banana).

Building up his portrait of noise, colour, fractured images of analysis for his flagged pursuit of happiness, Keller does both humour and compassion from the confrontation of present age and past



Bruce Keller as Krapp in La Mama's *Waiting*. Photo: Graham Cottrell

had little to do with what is contained in this fifteen-minute extended image encompassing a lifetime of unquelled suffering. It is an old woman's threnody. Marilyn O'Donnell's young, bright, chirpy voice was not able to rage, yet, with the monotone, tension and dramatic force of this piece. The opacity of the settings made it difficult to place the Auditor in a position from which his function and "gesture of compression" could be derived

youth. The contrast between his myopic, catenated eyes of the now, and the occasional glazed-over gaze recalling the then ("The face the half. The eyes"). Ah well... I revisited an actor capable of real depth and potential.

With two fatalities out of four sets, Jean-Pierre Mignot should be encouraged that his French training and ten years' work in European theatres is beginning to bear fruit here.

Sheer caviar

THE OLD COUNTRY

By Raymond Stanley

The Old Country by Alan Bennett. Music Box Theatre, 1986. Directed by Alan Bennett. Music Box Theatre, 1986. Producers: The Old Country Distribution Theatre Trust, The Old Country Organisation and Philip Emanuel. Production supervisor: Charles Turner. Melbourne: The Old Country, 1986. (February 1986)

Executive producer: William Morley. Director: Robert Lepage. Design: James McIvor. Lighting: Walter Van Nieuwenhuyse. Cost: Hilary. Robert Morley. Rose: Margaret Lee. Roger Van Mastrigenberg: Olga. Cooke: Pippa Bell. Walter Eaton: Veronika. Belinda Welsh. (Postproduced)

Here is a play every intelligent theatregoer appreciating good thought-provoking theatre should rush to see. It is sheer caviar.

Admittedly, it is not easy to follow; it requires such absolute concentration and memory of what has previously been said or missed. For full appreciation an respect is needed of people, places and things briefly referred to. And some of the references cannot be very familiar to Australian ears. But author Bennett never labours at any point and those who quickly grasp it at first hearing, a second hearing likely to be missed later.

All seems veiled in mystery. Elderly Hilary lives with wife Eric in a haphazard, cluttered, mismatched wooden place surrounded by trees. Where? There are

references to Scotland, but not until Hilary's complaint wills into the firm act: "Of course the service is bad here, but then it always has been. Apparently one waited an age in a restaurant even under the Tsars. Nothing has changed" — is Russia specified as the setting.

The couple are visited by young Eric and his wife Olga. Eric is energetic, is a straightforward man from Portsmouth Dockyard; his wife speaks with a slight accent. When the pair have left, Hilary remarks that he, Eric and Olga have nothing in common at all. "Except the one thing — you're all trash," says Eric. Then another line is dropped.

Soon there arrive upon the scene Hilary's sister, Veronika, and her newly-knighted husband, Duff, who seems to be very influential and sits on various committees. It appears the two pairs are awaiting for the same two intervening years.

Apparently Duff's mission in coming to Russia is to persuade Hilary to return to England. He suggests a publiskon could be increased in his interests. Olga it seems is in league with Duff to return her brother-in-law somehow to England. "The British have someone we want," she says. "We have no one they especially want, but you will."

Hilary is apathetic about going. Eric tells her it is Eric who would like to return. She once apparently had a one-night stand with Duff, but he it is who remains on at the end.

There is little plot, but much talk. The dialogue is very rich and always worth listening to, scattered with jewels of wit.

Frequently one is reminded of T S Eliot, and it would seem Bennett has been influenced by the plays of John Whiting, Charles Morgan and Harold Pinter. And because of the setting — there is an overall feeling of Cockney.

Robert Morley makes the role of Hilary seem tailor-made. Incredibly witty here, Galliford has his as naturally as if they were his own words, delivered during an interview, said and sheltered by ironic sneer, raising of eyebrows and sense of the ridiculous. After seeing Morley in the part, it is impossible to imagine Hilary being played by any other actor — and certainly not Alec Guinness, who created the role in London.

Bettina Welsh seems just right for Veronika. Her entrance on stage is like a mild explosion and brightens up everything around. She gains every kinetic measure effect in her unique throaty voice.

With Marge Lee, looking every inch the faded wife, Eric, one sometimes has difficulty hearing ends of sentences. For all her performance is, one still feels there are more depths of her role to be plumbed.

A strange unrecognisable accent seems to hang over Robert Van Mackelenberg's playing of Eric, but as Olga Louise Page is spot on.

Robin Lepage has done a great job of direction, ably moving characters around in some very static situations. Occasionally though, on the first night, there are some bad markings.

And James Ridderick's set is really outstanding.



Hilary (Robert Morley), Veronika (Bettina Welsh) and Eric (Robin Lepage) in *The Old Country*

Photo: David Parker

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ATTENTION

Miracle of logical exploitation

JUDGEMENT

By Cathy Peeler

Judgement, by Barry Collier. Malthouse Theatre, Melbourne Vic. Opened 24 January 1988. Director: William Gleich. Design: Robert Gruen. Costume: Wendy Robertson. Cast: Andrew Vakher, Malcolm Robertson. (Photographer)

"Only a party to a case can really judge, but being a party, it cannot judge. Hence there is no possibility of judgement in this world, but only the gleam of a possibility."

Judgement, by English writer Barry Collier, sets firmly within the terms of Kafka's parable. His play is alicharithmic account of an incident in Southern Poland during the Second World War: an incident that George Steiner refers to in his *Death of Tragedy*.

In broad details are as follows. A group of Russian officers were captured by the German Army and imprisoned in a condemned monastery without clothes, food or water. Two months later the advancing Red Army discovered the two survivors — brothers, one of whom was deserted by their survival through cannibalism, the other having retained his sanity.

After their rescue, they were given a decent meal and then shot. "But the soldiers say so what abomination their former officers had been reduced!" Steiner.

The play is written in the form of a dramatic monologue and is spoken by the single sane survivor. A deeply harrowing piece, its dramatic focus rests with great focus on the moral ambiguity of Vakher's sanity. The "judgement" he seeks is a judgement about his own comparses, and his conserving ability to present an articulate and logical account of the ordeal. As he says: "My own state of mind is my accuser."

The theatre is set up in a courtroom before which Vakher stands virtually motionless, clad in what and with his hands behind his back. Beside him is a small deal-table on which rests a sharpened human thigh bone — his "silent witness", and later identified as belonging to the remains of Officer Lubanski.

Vakher asks: "Am I not the logical savage? Am I not a visitor restrained from the law frontier? And the ensuing monologue is brilliantly informed to the explosions of his fierce moral dilemma.

The real strength of this script lies with its refusal to allow the whole barbarous experience to degenerate into harrowing and voodoo. Vakher's dual crime — to have survived through cannibalism, and to have survived sane is depicted with a

control and a sensitivity that is quite staggering. Invariably, the play raises wider issues of morality and "judgement".

Have we created a world in which survival depends upon strategies as barbarous and as inhuman that it makes resistance to it like a moral order? There is no answer to this question however, for as Vakher insists: "My problem is with the facts. You are with the interpretation of the facts."

Malcolm Robertson brings a formidable elation of energy and concentration to his character. The images he creates over the space of two hours are drawn with an economy and an intelligence that is spare, and entirely unforgettable.

Using only his voice, he explores the possibilities of reported speech to the utmost, reading out the contradictions and the ironies of Vakher's sane life and finding a high precision and clarity for precisely that material which alienates and repulses his fellow men.

Robertson, and director William Gleich work within tight lines, and never lose sight of the fine causal lines which hold Vakher's right-left together. In short, a master of logical exposition, and of accountability which triumphs. On opening night, they were rewarded. There was no applause, and when the lights were down the audience were just left stunned in their seats.



Malcolm Robertson in "Judgement". Photo: Jeff Bush

THEATRE/WA



State Rep./Jean Ambrose

Intelligent, entertaining

GARDEN PARTY

By Margaret Luke

Garden Party, by Edgar Melsalle, The Walkout/Whit Theatre, Perth WA, Opened 21 January 1988
Director: Raymond Gomber; Designer: Bill Dried; Costumes: Elizabeth Bremner; Music: Ray Raymond; Cast: Michael Maclean, Michaela Norton, Neville Tread, Sally Hartley, Margaret Dore, Ross Morris, Garry Canning, Phillip Edgar Melsalle, Michaela Norton, Jean Symes, Barbara Michael, Michael van Gehren, Troy Robertson, Val Hartman (Professional).

Edgar Melsalle, long a dominating force in Perth Theatre, has entered a new phase. As an actor and director he has been sporadically showered with praise, awards and admiration. As a writer, he has been known for lightweight entertainment reviews and pantomime scripts of more than average wit have punctuated many mid-year festivites. Although he is the author of three "straight" plays which have been produced in Britain, *Garden Party* is our first introduction to Melsalle the Actual Playwright.

Well before the first night the grapevine had prepared the cognoscenti that the play would be full of recognisable figures from the arts and academia, and provide a lively in-group game of "name the original".

What in fact emerged was a very funny, and perceptive study. The play is an anthropological (or anthropomorph) study of universally recognisable types with a certain local colouring. Each capital city of Australia (and for that matter their provincial counterparts in Britain) has its dragon-lady who collects

ambitious and pliable young men to act as emotional props and cheap domestic labour; an boorish senior academic who tell aggressively useless jokes and harp on after vulnerable young women; no due academic wives, no heart-of-gold party-crasher types - need one guess? Except that Melsalle, contrary to the current fashion of making them cleverer than life has made them, make us viscerally, funny or bitchier, as relevant. One is reminded at times of Coward, at other times of Ayckbourn. This does not apply that the play is derivative or banal, but rather shows it at the company of its peers.

Ray O'Donnell's production is an unqualified success. A strong cast moves smoothly through Bill Dried's uncluttered set, which has the right touch of Perth "Old Suburb" elegance with gracious pat plants and boats. Pacing and mood-setting is subtle; the play's balance of serious social observation and hilarious comedy of manners depends on a rare feeling for the contrasts and rhythms, and the cast players, each of them an interesting character-study, are allowed their star-time and to contribute to the social fabric of the see-no-beautiful people as play.

Within the deceptively simple

set Australian gastronomes by the deliciously camp French restauranteur, played with relish and gay abandon by Melsalle himself.

If the art of the dialogue is the dominating quality of the play, the serious undercurrents, typically as developed in the second act, make their impression. There are excellent confrontations involving jaded marriage-partners and lovers. Neville Tread stands out in a range of offhanded moods, from soliloquies to boorish attitudes to pathetically considerate. Margaret Ford, as punny-obtuse and endlessly tactful, Mervyn Canning gives a fine picture of a sensitive young woman coping with a complex social and emotional situation, and Joan Sydney plots a subtle course from seemingly indomitable chemistry to deflated despair.

Rosmary Barr, plays the hothead who gets the Quirke Party, sketched in pure school, and one thoroughly enjoys the moment of her final come-down when the young man, Raymond, played with amiable reticence by Gerald Hartcock, finally leaves her. Mark van Schoer plays a young Greek student with charm and foreign courtesy, and Vic Hartman is a television



Mr Maclean and Michaela Norton in *Garden Party*. Photo: Jaki McConnell

framework of a Sunday garden party characters are introduced and revealed, relationships form and crumble, and a way of life is portrayed with moving accuracy.

Melsalle has a fine ear for the social nuances implied by tone. The easy clichés of his semi-social academic wife are spoilt on stage; the gloriously bitchy speech

smooths, projects a suitably convincing quality of social glamour.

The whole thing is enormously intelligent, perceptive, and thoroughly entertaining, and one hopes that despite the handicaps of critical fustiness and Australian geography, the play will make its way beyond the tree-lined suburbs of Perth.

OPERA

WA Opera fracas

By Leslie Anderson

Whether it's confined to all performing arts companies or just a desire not to be upstaged by the big boys, Western Australia has had its own behind-the-scenes drama in the music world. While not attracting national publicity, nor involving international names, the battle has triggered genuine misgivings in the State.

In November the Western Australian Opera Company had just started a five-night sell-out season at the Perth Concert Hall. There was a pregnancy about the final bows of musical director Alan Abbott and tenor Gerald Stein. Their bows were definitely final. Mr Abbott's contract with the company was not to be renewed. The also meant the end of his three-year association with the WA Arts Orchestra. Mr Stein's contract has also expired.

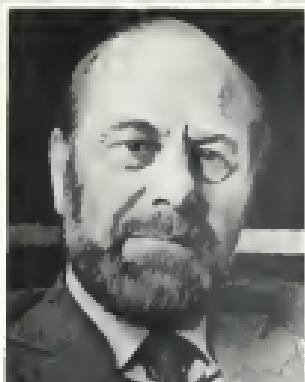
There was an irony in the success of *Medea* Benefit which in the late 19th century grand opera tradition.

When a confidential review commissioned by the Western Australian Arts Council found its way into the daily press the Opera Company was publicly charged for being too ambitious. In the hubbub following the leaking of a review into opera and music theatre in WA, it was alleged that the company had used the council report as a excuse to get rid of Alan Abbott.

This is vehemently denied by the general manager of the Opera Company, Mr Van Warriner, variously described as "the best opera administrator in the country" or "the master". He has insisted that the funding for the company is so problematical in its position to offer long-term contracts to anybody. Mr Gerald Krug has been offered and has accepted a five-month contract.

Mr Warriner has said that short-term contracts are unsatisfactory artistically but existing funding arrangements rule out long-term contracts. He makes no secret of his bewilderment about the opera and music theatre review undertaken by the committee of inquiry set up by the Arts Council.

"The inquiry of the report was that it was presented as a fait accompli," he said. "The recommendations were not forwarded without the company being given a chance to refute all points or discuss proposed



Alan Abbott, Dean of Arts at WAIF

solutions. There have been subsequent discussions but it was an absolute denial of democracy.

"The Council gets quarterly reports and financial statements from the Company. They were never questioned. I find it a remarkable situation that a report could be brought down by a supposedly separable body of people without the major company under scrutiny being asked for explanations. Whatever leaked that report to the press was no friend of open or free State."

If Mr Warriner's reaction was bitter, the reaction of the review council chairman, Professor Frank Callow, was concerned.

The review was published while he was abroad. Among other things it said:

- The Opera Company had attempted an overambitious range of productions.
- The Company had failed to follow a consistent artistic policy and had too readily expected that subsidies should make up for deficiencies.
- Standards of professionalism did not match up to standards being obtained elsewhere.
- WA is not yet in a position to maintain a full-scale professional opera company capable of providing full-time employment.
- Professional and amateur groups should co-operate more.
- An association should be established between the WA Opera Company and the State Opera Company of South Australia.

The dust was still settling from the fracas when the news broke that Alan Abbott's contract was not being renewed. Meanwhile, in the absence of Professor

Calloway, the acting chairman of the Arts Council, Mrs Bruce Underwood, released a press statement denying claims that the review into opera and music theatre had set out to undermine the work of the Opera Company. The Council reaffirmed its support for opera and music theatre within the State in styles and forms appropriate to local circumstances and resources.

Mrs Underwood said the review had been prompted, in part, by the Opera Company's request for an additional \$75,000 above an 1879 grant of \$172,000 from the Arts Council and a grant of \$40,000 from the Australia Council. The grant is the second largest grant awarded by the Arts Council in WA.

Professor Calloway, on his return, on a short sojourn, raffled feathers with all the aplomb of a Sally Rand (Experienced for pleasure, at times, have to protect both their front and their rear simultaneously.) He endorsed Mrs Underwood's press statement and the words "accountability", "public money" and "responsibility" were used.

The committee of inquiry comprised Mr Derek Holroyde, Dean of the School of Arts and Design at the WA Institute of Technology, Mrs Judy Reynolds, honorary director of the Avon Valley Arts Society, Miss Elizabeth Sweeting, a former general manager of the English Opera Group and director of the graduate diploma course in arts administration at the South Australian Institute of Technology and Mr David Richardson of Perth, a partner in Coopers and Lybrand Services who studied the operation of the Australian Opera.

Mr Holroyde and Mrs Reynolds are members of the WA Arts Council. The committee was set up in March last year and called for submissions from the public. More than one hundred submissions were received and a report was presented to the Arts Council in July.

One could not question the courage of the committee. One should not question their integrity and goodwill for opera and music theatre in WA. But one could and should question the wisdom of Arts Council involvement in a review which, whatever its intention, read as an indictment of WA's leading musical organization.

Perth's performing arts community is a small one with the usual jealousies and jockeying for position. This kind of brouhaha we have been witnessing only confirms the suspicions of politicians and public that art is a luxury, elitist area adorning of the tax dollar.

SAVE THE WARNER THEATRE

Dear Sir,

The committee of The Association of Community Theatres protests in the strongest possible terms at the Commonwealth Bank's proposed demolition of the Warner Theatre.

Built for live theatre in 1856 it has been in continuous use since that time and is one of the oldest surviving theatre buildings in the country.

Australia's cultural heritage has been too often vandalised in the name of commerce. We call upon the Commonwealth Bank to preserve this theatre for posterity.

In other cities of Australia public buildings of beauty and importance to our heritage have been preserved through public outcry as their proposed destruction. The State Theatre in Sydney has been threatened but still stands. The Regent Theatre in Brisbane still stands despite many threats. Adelaide citizens remember with horror what happened to the Theatre Royal. Please do not let this

happen to the Warner.

Public outcry will surely force one of Australia's largest financial institutions to reconsider and incorporate the theatre within the new building design. Theatre people and conservationists in other Australian cities have rallied before and stopped short-sighted demolition of a part of their city's history. Do Adelaide people care less?

Remember Edmund Wright House and let's get off our collective backsides and tell the bank that we won't allow the destruction of yet another of Adelaide's historic landmarks. If the Commonwealth Bank will not reconsider may we suggest that theatre people, theatre companies, and concerned individuals consider where they bank and why.

For the committee of The Association of Community Theatres

Edwin Reif (ACT Administrator),
Adelaide SA

many of the same comments expressed in your letter, and hopes that the important traditions of this theatre space will continue.

Yours sincerely

Bob Adams

Director

Theatre Board

POOR QUALITY PETER PAN

Dear Sir,

Recently I took my young niece to see Robina Board's production of *Peter Pan* at the Comedy Theatre in Melbourne. I was annoyed at having to pay \$4.00 for a two-year old child and \$6.50 for myself, a student. However, I paid the money in the belief that the pantomime would be enjoyable and of reasonable standard which is surely what one is entitled to expect at those prices.

Not so, however. I was appalled at the whole production. Perhaps with the exception of Hugh Munro (Peter Pan) there was a complete lack of energy and enthusiasm generated by either the adult or child actors, the direction was terrible and the talent was noticeable only by its acute absence. Small wonder that we could tolerate it no longer than interval. One does not need to be a connoisseur of the theatre to realize just how bad this production was.

It amazes me that it even ran the length of its scheduled session, ripping off the public with a poor quality pantomime which would perhaps be just passable in a high school auditorium as a lousy idea of successful theatre.

Perhaps it is just that the Melbourne public, children in particular, are starved of family theatrical entertainment that it will undiscriminatingly digest any amount of crap it is served up. There is ample evidence of the superb talent that abounds in this state, not to mention the rest of the country. One would wonder why better use is not being made of our excellent resources.

Yours sincerely,
Tom Verner,
Moonee Ponds, Vic.

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AN OPEN LETTER TO MUNSHIAN BATMAN ADAMS Dear Mrs. Hutchinson and Adams

We are disappointed that your Open Letter to the Theatre Board in February makes no reference to the explanation with respect to La Mama already given to you in our letter of 7 January 1980.

The simple facts are that La Mama, when applying to the Theatre Board in September, advised:

"We will be submitting the same budget to the Victorian Ministry for the Arts."

Unfortunately when the Theatre Board met to consider La Mama's application on 28-30 November 1979, La Mama had not yet submitted its application to the Victorian Ministry. The Theatre Board, therefore, made an interim grant to ensure that there would be no interruption in the activities of La Mama, and deferred to its March meeting a final decision on the total grant for 1980.

All your queries about motives and perversely seem to ignore the facts. The Theatre Board regards La Mama with

BOOKS



By John McCallum

Calm before the storm?

After The Doll by Peter Fitzpatrick
Edward Arnold, 1979
Makassar Reef by Alexander Barr
Currency Press, 1979
Maugis 4 1979

I have before me this month two assessments of the present state of Australian theatre and drama, both of which find that, in the words of one, "the mood at the moment is one of some calm". Both are motivated by more than a turn-of-the-decade desire to sum up. Peter Fitzpatrick, in *After The Doll*, studies the last twenty-five years of Australian playwriting and concludes that we are in many ways still concerned with the same old debates — that is, spite of the tremendous concentration and maturation, particularly in the last twelve years, the central interest and leading assumption of our drama have hardly changed. Jack Hibberd, in an article, "Promises Are Still", in a recent *Moyses* considers that the changes and innovations of the last decade have been happily assimilated into the theatrical穩定 quo, but that is all, the established theatre itself has not subsequently developed. Barry DKins, in the same issue, provides a striking example of the truth of that conclusion:

I also have before me, however, the Currency Press edition of Alex Barr's superb play *Makassar Reef*, which at least shows that we are in a great place to be based, but which also answers Peter Fitzpatrick's reservations about new developments in Australian playwriting. I

have always been a great admirer of Barr's work (as have many other people, in spite of a few cynical) and I find it difficult to understand the sour critical response *Makassar Reef* had.

Contrary to what many people seem to assume, Barr is not a failed romantic writer, whose love of wit and style interferes with his characters and, whose use of specific social settings implies a cynical attempt to depict Australian social mores. In a highly convincing way (as even his detractors acknowledge) he uses familiar genres and his own language in wit and verbal dexterity to explore

lasting, emotionally truthful ideas with which to do so.

Apart from this particular argument within *After The Doll* and a very useful and acute account of an subject, it does not overcome all the problems of writing a fully integrated social and literary history of drama — no work could — but it is interesting and provocative about the latest period of Australian drama. As is inevitable in a work with a literary rather than a theatrical approach, it places a great deal of emphasis on language. I am not altogether convinced by the argument that rooms plays have in a special way been about language itself, but it is a sign of the book's worth that one is able to respond constructively and warmly to its arguments.

Jack Hibberd's argument, contained in a short, allusive article, is much more briefly put but no less provocative for that. The difficulty for me about it is that I believe him to be completely right — that much current Australian theatre is completely directionless, institutionalised and that as concerns the outside the general social and cultural life of the communities in which they are pursued. And yet it is so tempting to point to the transformations we do get from the theatre, and say that if we have such plays as *Foxes*, *The Man From Macquarie* and *Makassar Reef* (and indeed *The Charnel*) then things can't be too bad. For this is perhaps the whole trouble — that purified enthusiasm for what we know turns too easily into complacency.

Theatrically Hibberd's perspective includes what he calls polycentric theatre in a range of small community theatres "with their own personalities and rationales", a "theatre republic". This sort of theatrical decentralisation is of first importance if we are to break the monopolies of the existing large theatre organisations and the "centralised Londoners". I gather that the sort of thing is beginning to happen in Victoria. In NSW Aaron Nease took over as Artistic Director of the Hunter Valley Theatre Company in Newcastle, and announced that Newcastle should theatrically become more than a satellite of Sydney. Barry DKins wrote in *Moyses*, that his artistic roots are in Broken Hill. I still think that a theatre scene which can encompass the huge, but highly different talents of Barry DKins and Alex Barr's might something going for it, but certainly when we have rechristened the human, social and sensual "theory" of theatre and when, like Eugene Ionesco, we can bring these Institutes with each other, then we will have a much more exciting theatrical life.

Matthew Parker Baker

After The Doll
Australian Drama since 1970

Peter Fitzpatrick

quite profoundly the quiet desperation of his leading characters.

These characters, like Carisite Landfawson, Edward Marullo, Weeks Brown, Bob Flawson and Woody Orton, are in these different ways caught up in sophisticated moral dilemmas as they try to find ways of not hurting each other of finding stability in their relationships with each other, and of reconciling these moral choices with their own needs and ideals. This is naturally as complicated business and there is no simple moralist, as the plays demand great concentration. That concentration is assisted by the witty and entertaining form, although some critics claim to find that they can't see past the earlier brilliance (like *Maugis*), as it becomes encumbered by unnecessary production, as *Splinter* at least.

It is this formally precise and complex treatment of deeply human problems which seems to belie Peter Fitzpatrick's guarded pessimism. Barr at least has moved well beyond the old debates of representing Australians as themselves and

ACT

THEATRE

ALPHA THEATRE

ANU Arts Centre, Lyre Room by Alan McKay. 3 one-act Australian plays. 12-15 March

AUSTRALIAN THEATRE WORKSHOP

Chidlers Street Hall, The Glad Word by Sean Wilson, director, Warwick Bauer. March 12-20

John Wilson's *Macbethus*; supper show March 13-20

CANBERRA REPERTORY (49 4222)

Theatre Three: Joseph Conrad's *Gore* Alibey by David Allen, director, Ken Boucher. To March 13

CANBERRA THEATRE (49 8211)

La Citta puppet *Mario Momo*. March 24-25

ORTUNE THEATRE COMPANY

Playhouse (49 4488)
Akira by David Radkin. To March 5. Canberra Theatre Centre. Luncheon performances from March 17 for six weeks.

PLAYHOUSE (49 4488)

Lyric Southern Regional Theatre, Canberra by Jill Stoen. March 4-8

REID HOUSE THEATRE

WORKSHOP (47 0781)
School performances: *Mr Jack You Jack* and performances in the park during Canberra week. Adults' Festival: *Mr Jack You Jack and Romeo's Nose*. Community show being developed with John Roper, writer in residence, right March.

DANCE

ANU ARTS CENTRE (49 4787)

The Human Voice, dance company in residence with Dan Babbitt, choreographer. Workshops

CANBERRA THEATRE (49 8211)

John Hall's *At the Komische Oper*. Sunday and three short ballets. March 11- April 1

PLAYHOUSE (49 4488)

College Music Theatre. March 14

OPERA

CANBERRA THEATRE (49 8211)

Australian Opera: *Carrie of the Golden West* and *Don Giovanni*. March 20-24

CONCERTS

ANU ARTS CENTRE (49 4787)

Bert Jansch in concert. March 30

CANBERRA THEATRE (49 8211)

John Williams and Sire, March 20

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Canberra Symphony Orchestra, Gold Series March 5

Canberra Symphony Orchestra, Green series March 6

Chamber Music Society 5th concert March 8

Canberra Orchestra, Mozart Festival concert March 12

Lunchtime concerts. March 14-21

Warran Philharmonic orchestra March 28

Chamber Music Society second concert March 29

UNIVERSITY HOUSE

Michael Gudde, violin. March 16

For entries contact: *Art's Bureau* on 49 3117

NSW

THEATRE

ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW SOUTH WALES (237 6611)

School Tours: *The Australia*, wallcharts maps for infants and primary, South Coast and March 20

Penrith, drama for infants and primary, Central and Far West throughout March

Bliss: *Bliss* children's play for infants and primary, Riverina and March 20

Jesus: *Jesus* music show for infants, primary and secondary, North Coast and Hunter until March 28

The Quavers, folk music for infants, primary and secondary North West and Hunter until March 28

Songtime, a renaissance musical ensemble for infants primary and secondary metropolitan areas from March 17

Adult Tours: *Private* by Roger Hall, directed by Don Mackay with Paul Kara, Anna Fleiss and Peter Cummins. Statewide from March 17

COURT HOUSE HOTEL (498 8262)

Oxford Street, Taylor Square

Galaxy in *Order* by Robert and David Lansbury, directed by Malcolm Penruy, music by Gary Smith with Susan Aspasia, Steven Sacks and Ray Jasan. Throughout March

ENSEMBLE THEATRE (929 8877)

How *Up Above*? by N F Simpson, directed: Max Phipps, with Lucy Charles, Maggie Dence, Jon Ewing, Hilary Larkham, Briony Phillips, Charlie Stratton and Greg Radford. Throughout March

FIRST STAGE THEATRE COMPANY (62 1633)

The Whistlers of *Theatre in Dreams*: *Form* by Gary Burt, directed by Chris Lewis, with Angela Burt, Darren Campbell and Gary Burt. Touring to schools throughout March

FLAME STRAINS BULL NURSH

THEATRE RESTAURANT (337 4627)

That's Rub: a musical review from the turn of the century to today, with Noel Shephy, Barbara Wyman, Garth Meade, Neil Bryant and Helen Lomax directed by George Carter. Throughout March

GENESIAN THEATRE (23 5641)

The Deep Blue Sea by Terence Rattigan, directed by Naomi Foss. Throughout March 15

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (212 3411)

Find The Lash by Michael Penner, directed by Shann Carter, with Mollie Sugden, Gordon Park, Andrew Earth and Myra Nohlen. Commences March 11

KIRRIBILLI PUB THEATRE (232 3415)

Kirribilli Hotel, Milsons Point

The Jilted Show by P P Courtney, directed by Raylene Young, music by Adam Moquin, with Danny Adcock, Marge McCrory, Peter Corlett, Ross Holmes and Laura Gehrke

LES CURRIE PRESENTATIONS (238 2870)

Madam Alice: *Twinkie* programme of clowns, music devised by Michael Franklin for infants, primary and secondary Sydney metropolitan areas from March 8

Colours: a programme of folk songs and stories describing colonial Australia devised and performed by Colin Douglas and Tony Suttor. Infants, primary and secondary NSW country throughout March

MARIAN STREET THEATRE (498 3166)

Closed for renovations

MARIONETTE THEATRE OF AUSTRALIA (2 05881)

Recording Hall, S O H, Coopers Lane and the Eastwood Civic, written by Patrick Cook and directed by Richard Bradshaw with music by Robyn Archer. Commences March 19

MUSIC HALL THEATRE RESTAURANT (609 8222)

East Lane by Mr Harry Wood, directed by Alan Harvey with Alan Harvey, Bernadette Houghton, Mal Cartmell and Christine Cameron. Throughout March

MUSIC LOFT THEATRE (377 8881)

Cough in the Air, a variety review produced by William Orr with Quenna Park, Barry Stewart, Myke Parker and Peter McGowan. Throughout March

NEW THEATRE (519 3400)

Steve Polson as George Soltan; directed by Ray Nichols. Throughout March

NIMROD THEATRE (09 5862)
Upstage - *Bitter's House* by Thomas Keneally, directed by Ken Horler, with Athol Compton, Justine Saunders, Bob Maru, Kevin Smith, John Reed, Bill Conn, Manus Morris and Philip Lenley. Until March 2.

The House Of The Dead Men by John Anthony King, directed by John Bell, with Paul Bernat, Vivienne Gurnett, Joseph Ford, Kerry Walker and Anna Volodja. Commences March 12.

Downtowners *Drawers* by Steven Szeidl, directed by Neil Arnott, with Nagi Hulchanski, Collie Firth, Judy Johnson, Michelle Frederks, Max Gulp and Barry Orr. Until March 31.

NEW THEATRE OF THE DEAF (03 1200)

The *Shout* - Alarm for primary schools and Actions Speak Louder Than Words for secondary schools, both directed by Jim Watson, with Nola Calleja, David London, Colin Allen, Bryan Jones and Rosemary Lunn. Metropolitans and throughout March.

PLAYERS THEATRE COMPANY (03 881911)

George M! Mother Dear Teach Me by Peter Bayley and John Mulder directed by Peter Bayley, with Lee Harris, Karen Johnson and John Mueller. Throughout March.

Q THEATRE (03 97 21 3039)

Friends by Alan Ayckbourn, Dennis from March 3, Orange from March 13 and Bank Holiday from March 21. **REVERINA TRUCKING COMPANY (0888 25 2052)**

Castings choose for double.

THE ROCKS PLAYERS (060 6284 6205)

150 Glebe Point Rd, Glebe.

A Midsummer Night's Dream by William Shakespeare, adapted by Bill Pepper. Commences March 17.

SEYMOUR CENTRE (0997 02521)

The Eyes of Sardis presented by Theatre des Jeunes. Access from March 10 to 17. *The Guy* presented by The College Morn Theatre with Miles Shapka. March 16 and 17.

SHOPFRONT THEATRE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE (088 3048)

Free drama workshops on weekends includes playbuilding, music, dance, puppetry, design, radio and video. *Children* and *The Tale Of The Teacup* touring schools and at Shopfront Theatre until March 13.

The Journey Home directed by Dan Maaroos in the Theatre from March 21 to 29. Shopfront Children touring country towns throughout March.

SPEAKEASY THEATRE (0882 3862)

That's Showbiz produced directed by Alan Lunn with Alan Lane, Diane Murray, Peter Noble, and Susan Joyce. Throughout March.

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE (2 0588)
Desired Life An Egg presented by Haben Miles from March 23 to 29.
Brave Through Four Decades presented by Gisela May on March 8.
Most of Me presented by La Class from March 2 to 8.

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY (2 0580)

Shaw Theatre, 50 St. Closer of *Fly* by Simon Gray, directed by Rodney Fisher, with Ruth Cracknell and Frank Thring. Until March 22.
THEATRE ROYALE (03 6111 0110)
Craig Russell Company until March 8.
The Old Country by Alan Bennett, directed by Robin Lunnigan, with Robert Morley, Patricia Welsh, Willis Estlin, Margo Lee, Roben van Merkellenberg and Louise Page. Commences March 18.

OPERA

THE AUSTRALIAN OPERA (2 0580)

Sydney Opera House.
The Magic Flute by Mozart, conducted by Michael Sorengi and produced by John Bayley.
Nabucco by Verdi, conducted by Geoffrey Arnold and produced by Tim Longwood - March 1.

DANCE

THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET (2 0588)

Sydney Opera House.
Programme 1 - *Symphony* of choreography George Balanchine, music Georges Bizet. *Salomé* choreography Mikhael Fokine, music Nicols Rimsky-Korsakoff, and *Graduation Ball* choreography David Lichine, music Jérôme Stroh. II Commences March 21.
SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE (2 0588)
Prague Chamber Ballet. March 10 to 13.

CONCERTS

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (212 3411)

Peter Allen until March 1.
REGENT THEATRE (01 4961)
Max Hedges from March 20 to 21.
HOBOKEN PAVILION (21 3769)
Fleetwood Mac. March 15 and 16.

For entries contact Concert Line on 157 1200/909 3810.

QLD

THEATRE

ARTS THEATRE (36 2344)

Happy Family by Gisela Cooper, directed by Dorothy Baskett, designer, Paul Johnson. Feb 14 - March 22.
BRISBANE ACTORS COMPANY (169 1679)

For details phone the company.

HER MAJESTY'S (23 1379)

The Old Country by Alan Bennett, producer, Robert Morley, Director, Robe Lovett, Designer James Ridewood, with Robert Morley. March 4-15.

PA RONTE (26 1622)

King In Love by Stephen Meagher, director, Nicky Bracknell. To 29 March.
Rehearsal *Our Seasons* by Doreen Clark, director, Malcolm Bayliss.

POPULAR THEATRE TROUPE (26 1745)

On tour.

QUEENSLAND THEATRE

COMPANY (229 1010)

Giorgio by Sigrid and Svennberg, director, John Knottgrill, musical director, Brian Stoen, choreography, Jack Webster, designer, Stephen Gora, with Jane Soller. March 1-29.

TN COMPANY (23 8888)

The Threepenny Opera by Bertolt Brecht, music, Kurt Weill, producer, John Milson, designer, David Bell, with Geoff Skarmaght, Marian Ware, Judith Anderson. March 29-April 21.

DANCE

QUEENSLAND BALLET COMPANY (229 1030)

On tour.

QUEENSLAND BALLET THEATRE (229 1010)

Swan Lake Act 2 and *Sylph*. March 17-22.

OPERA

QUEENSLAND OPERA COMPANY (221 7749)

Alan Stewart, director, John Thompson, conductor, Graham Young, designer, Mike Bridges, with Philip Bell, Margaret Russell, Honey Howell. 19 Feb - 1 March.

CONCERTS

QUEENSLAND ARTS COUNCIL (221 5466)

Warren National Philharmonic Orchestra. March 27.
Wayne Robin Brown - concert QM.

For enquires contact: Don Bachrach on 086 6121

SA

ADELAIDE FESTIVAL THEATRE

OPERA THEATRE (51 0121)

Along Came a New York Elizabeth I by Paul Footer, director, designer Lewis Cates March 7, 8, 10, 12

The House (based by William) director, Michael Katz March 13, 14, 15

La Cieca Company Hoy El Mismo (puppets), director Joan Serrat March 17-22

TOURNEAU AT THE RED SHED

Copernicus and Company by Duncan Clarke and David Allen March 18-19

THE STAGE COMPANY

Centre for the Performing Arts London and the Poles by Ken Ross, director, Bruce Debray March 19-22, 26-29

UNION HALL (51 0121)

Songs From Satyricon (Aria) by and with Robyn Archer, also with Robyn Nevin, director, Pam Brighton March 8-22

THE QUARRY, Teatre Goya (51 0121) Centre for International Theatre Creations (Ceti) by Alfred Jarry, director, Peter Brook March 18, 19, 20, 24, 25

The R, director Peter Brook March 21, 22

Conference of the Birds, director, Peter Brook March 26, 27, 28, 29

Dialogue with Peter Brook, SBSA Pavilion, March 28, 29

PLAYHOUSE (51 0121)

State Theatre Co. Murray Pleasant of Wakefield, director, Colin George March 8-29

King Stag by Carlo Gozzi, adapted, Nick Bright, director Nick Bright March 13-29

Performances of three new Australian plays March 11, 18, 27

ABC'S THEATRE (51 0121)

Melbourne Theatre Co. Big River by Alan Baro, director, John Sopner March 7-15

Mabou Mines Drunken Lake An Egg from Collette director, JoAnn Akalaitis March 16-22

The Heartache and Sorrow Company The Case of Rosemary Mansfield compiled and performed by Cathy Downes March 24-29

THE SPACE (51 0121)

Sydney Theatre Co. Five Getting Off *Art Together and Playing It On The Road* by Cyrius and Ford, director, Richard Wherrett March 18-29

Marymonte Theatre Co. Captain James by Patrick Cook, director, Richard Bradshaw (stage) Robyn Archer March 16-19

SCOTT THEATRE (51 0121)

Young People's Programme The Zoo Publisher by Maxwell Davies, director, Helmut Bakaitis March 9-13

Girola May and Alfred Molina: What Keeps Mankind Alive March 16

Theatre des Jeunes Acteurs Les Lions de Sable by Maurice Yvobi March 21, 22

St. Marnen Youth Arts Centre The Zip and Zap Polka, director Michael Macmanus March 25-27

Cast's About by Alan McKay, director, Helmut Bakaitis March 28-29

Include James Galway

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TAS

THEATRE

SALAMANCA THEATRE CO (51 0259)

Productions touring schools *Mammoth* by Cowdry Belgrade TIE Group (primary and lower secondary)

May Festival by Adrian Mitchell (general secondary)

One by Nigel Triffitt (general secondary) *One At Six* by Mirek (general secondary) All directed by Greg Shears, producer Barbara Manning, designer, Maria Chagnick

tasmanian PUPPET THEATRE (23 12 7994)

The Sage of Peach and Ashu, director, Peter Wilson, designer, Beverley Campbell Jackson

The Tame Tiger, director Peter Wilson, designer, Alex Andrait, devised by John Lomax

THEATRE ROYAL (34 6266)

La Cieca Company of Barcelona To March 1

Find The Lash by Michael Perrow, director Ted Craig, with Molly Neale March 4-8

Malibu Music Theatre Co March 11-15

MUSIC

FESTIVAL THEATRE (51 0121)

State Opera of SA Death and Desire by Benjamin Britten, director, Jim Sharman March 8-15

ROYALTY THEATRE

Girola May and Ensemble Noppo Bar Labro March 13

Snow's Ministry in *Three Snow* and *Three Wise Refined* Justice Mervin, director, Leonard Sloane March 24-28

TOWN HALL

Girola May *Death through Four Oceans* March 13

Every Good Boy Deserves Favour by Tom Stoppard, director, Ken Horler Conductor, John Harding, Australian Chamber Orchestra March 17-21

DANCE

THEATRE ROYAL (34 6266)

Prague Chamber Ballet March 21, 22

CONCERTS

THEATRE ROYAL (34 6266)

Alexander Lagoya: Gounod recital March 19

For enquires contact the relevant office on 51 0121 4479

CONCERTS

VIC

THEATRE

ALEXANDER THEATRE (540 2828)

House by James Acheson. *The Last of Sand*, presented by the Victorian Arts Council. Hours: Open on selected days.

AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING GROUP (347 7320)

Curious, Warming Bruce Spence

Sure David by Howard Brenton, director, Wilfred Last and Richard Murphy, with Wilfred Last, Fay Masale and Marilyn O'Dowd.

COMEDY CAFE (Brunswick St, East St)

Original Comedy entertainment starring Rod Quantock.

HOOPLA THEATRE FOUNDATION (663 7645)

Playbox (Downstairs). *Quandaphone* by Ted Nodder, director Charles Tengach, designer, Tracey Watt. World premiere.

That's The Way To Do It, with Chris Harris, a celebration of the comedy of Punch and Judy. From March 18.

Playbox upstairs. *Arakaka Mystic* by Roger Palviers, director Malcolm Robertson.

Lyrics Down At The Bottom Of The Hand by David Allen, director, Murray Copland, designer, Jason Tate. From March 27.

HER MAJESTY'S (661 4210)

Sam of Beau, devised by and starring Ray Lovett, director, Peter Haney, with the Wellington Brass band.

LAST LAUGH THEATRE

RESTAURANT (419 4236)

The Hairy Biker (With The Fox), starring the Wurzels, Slim Tattini, Phil Anzio, Jack and Gaudipa, director, Evelyn Krupa.

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY (654 0000)

Rebel Yell (Down by the Harlots), directed by Harold Prince, John Cairns, designer, Tanya McCollum, with Elizabeth Alexander, Nia Elphinston and John Stanton. To March 22.

Athenaeum (Holmes's Choice) by Harold Pritchard, director, Errol Haasen, designer Hugh Colman, with June Jago, Douglas Hodge, Simon Callow, Sally Calhoun, Karen Calhoun, Sydney Corban, Vivien Cooper and co. To March 22.

Albion 2: The Last Days of Alibi

Studio adapted by David Edgar, director, Judith Alexander, with David Dower. To March 22.

Other activities: *Caravan-Up and Tributary*.

Readings for Playrights

PILGRIM PUPPET THEATRE

6118 6630

Crown, Scream and Thrills written and directed by Bert Cooper.

UNIVERSAL THEATRE (449 2777)

Regularly changing programme of live entertainment.

COMMUNITY THEATRE

ACTIONS' THEATRE (449 1630)

Coward (The Comical Dragon) Set production for children.

ARENA CHILDREN'S THEATRE (341 0610)

Secondary Schools programme: *The Whale — The Biggest Thing That Ever Died* by Eric Krasl and Sebastian Co.

The Private Ear by Peter Shaffer.

CREATIVE ARTS THEATRE (8771 4056)

Who What When and Where (Jungs Jumbo and It's Only A Bit Of Green Glass), creative entertainment plays for children, touring in schools.

MILL COMMUNITY THEATRE PROJECT (352 22 2310)

Mill Theatre, Parkington St, Geelong. Activities and entertainment every Thursday evening.

MAJOR AMATEUR THEATRES

Bain Theatre Group (762 0002).

Clayton Theatre Group (878 1702).

Hoddleberg Rep (661 2261).

Midwest Theatre Co (211 0820).

Pampine Theatre (42 8237).

Willowtree Little Theatre (529 4267).

182 Theatre (708 8640).

DANCE

PALACE THEATRE (534 0557)

Beths Konschka Oper Ballet. Seven Solo and Programme. Two clear short ballets. March 5-18.

OPERA

PRINCESS THEATRE (662 2471)

Australian Opera. *The Magic Flute* in Mozart production, John Copley.

Victorian State Opera. *Cavie Don* by Rossini. In repertory.

For opera news see *Opera* on 781 7777.

WA

THEATRE

DOLPHIN THEATRE

Tale As Old As Time with Richard Stilgoe. To March 4.

Montacute and Sonne Company. *The Case of Amherst Mansfield* by Cathy Downes. 6-13 March.

Northern Drift presented by Merry Living and Alex Glasgow. (Australian premiere) 10 March 13.

HOLE IN THE WALL (381 2480)

Days in One Season by Dennis Clarke directed, Edgar Mittal. To March 15.

A Man Of Many Parts by Jack Hiltisch (world premiere), Stephen, Ray Ormond. To March 18 late night.

HAYMAN THEATRE, W.A.T. (739 7021)

Cop Out by Cliff Green, director Robert Eggerer. To March 15.

OCTAGON THEATRE

Acting Company of New York. *Elizabeth* by Paul Foster. To March 5.

That's the Way To Do It by Chris Harris and John Daven. with Chris Harris. March 6-13.

PLAYHOUSE (323 1880)

National Theatre Co. *Prisoner Of Paradise* by Peter Nagle, director Stephen Barry, designer, Tom Lipp. To March 13.

PERTH CONCERT HALL

An Evening with Jayne Caron.

REGAL THEATRE (381 1557)

An Alansburgh Party (Evening with Spike Milligan and Friends) with Mike McJunkin and Carl Vase. To March 13.

DANCE

WA BALLET COMPANY

Cakewalk (Woolly) by Christine Parrott, and *Concerto* (Graze) by Charles Czayk. March 6-13.

Young in Northern and Central Wreath. March 24-April 1.

CONCERTS

PERTH CONCERT HALL

WA Symphony Orchestra. First family concert conductor George Trister. March 28.

Other Festival Concerts include:

Tata Mana (Trio) (Brazil).

Star City Quartet (USA).

Netherlands Wind Ensemble.

Aranya (Trio).

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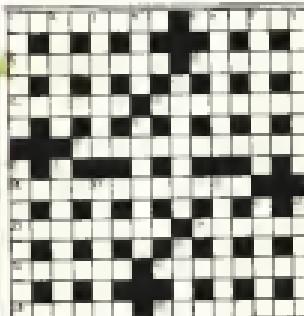
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Name _____

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Age/sex:

- 1 Elizabethan Scott is a pretender (11)
- 5 Darken Sarah's hand and Hell (11)
- 9 Burn out of line at the operah (8)
- 10 Girl that is a price bitch (6)
- 12 This idea occurred at midday, round a tree (11)
- 13 Get a private of the wine press, we hear (10)
- 15 Actor snatched in return for a delicious instrument (14,8)
- 16 Voter for King Richard (7,5)
- 23 Emancipists gathered river grass around (10,8) in the night (8)
- 24 Vessel even old here can fill (10)
- 26 At home with the second-rate companyman, it's infectious (10)
- 27 Playwright experienced a Southern

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cold, and the Queen as well (8)

28 Wetherham is an exciting mixture of a fish and a little old lady (8)

29 Avoided the innumerable artist (swarm) (10)

Down:

1 Joining priceless porcelain around a model (8)

2 Whirl round a letter thrown into the fireplace (8)

3 In a trice the ghouls are able to renew (7)

4 Make a sky poster of a non-starlet (10)

5 Fireplaces right in the heart of the papers (7)

7 This dragon is trained ungrapply (10)

8 Covers girl in the man's place (8)

11 A white of a jingle fellow (7)

14 Catch little in the meshes coming back from sugar (7)

16 The good man I throw over is apparent (8)

17 Renaissance about the M.L.A. (8)

19 Exhibit in which I snare is the easiest (10)

20 Playwright I had on and out (7)

21 Show at fifty goes in underneath (9)

22 Handover, and ruined utterly ruined (8)

23 The best cards are in Sir Charles Surface's hand (10)

The last crossword entry down on March 25 will receive one year's free subscription to FA

The winner of last month's Crossword was Dr John Upton of Eastwood, N.S.W.

